

DEVELOPMENTAL COMPOSITION IN COLLEGE

By

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A descriptive study of developmental writing programs in two- and four-year colleges, this paper investigates the following areas:

1. identifying students who need extra language skills help,
2. placing students in flexible programs so they can learn what they individually need to know,
3. evaluating materials to teach mechanical skills of grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, reading, etc.,
4. evaluating materials and methods of teaching the composing process itself,
5. designing a writing program which can prescribe for student language skills problems,
6. evaluating some existing writing programs for developmental students, and

7. training graduate assistants to teach students to write.

While all education can be called developmental in the sense that everyone's skills continue to develop regardless of educational level, the term developmental as used here refers to classes taught to freshman who enter college with verbal skills considerably lower than those of the average freshman student.

Open admissions policies in two-year colleges and special minority programs in four-year colleges have produced a greater need for developmental composition classes than previously existed. Objective placement tests are not always accurate; essay testing of all freshman is not always practical. Thus developmental classes may not always have all students who belong there, or who have similar problems within their group, so some kind of individualization is necessary.

Developmental students' problems in composition classes can be divided into two areas: weaknesses in writing skills (grammar, mechanics) and weaknesses in the composing process (organization, paragraph development, free writing, etc.). Methods others have found successful for dealing with these problems are discussed, and an annotated bibliography of helpful texts and materials is included as an appendix.

A chapter on administration of developmental writing programs includes training of graduate assistants, the pros and cons of assigning college grades and credit for such courses, and scheduling groups of developmental classes.

Nine successful developmental writing programs are discussed in detail with an emphasis on methods that are adaptable to other schools. Five of these programs are at community or junior colleges; four are at four-year schools. All successful programs have certain characteristics in common: they are well planned, with a trained staff in agreement with the aims of the program; they are individualized, offering students specific help that they individually need; and they are flexible, so that students may enter regular classes when they attain average verbal skills levels, or remain longer than one term if they cannot move as quickly as other students. Most of the successful programs combine free writing or journals with conventional themes; most require papers to be revised and returned to the instructor. The real differences between good developmental composition classes and regular composition classes are individualization of subject matter, carefully trained staff, and counseling of students.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the past we have without question raised the general level of literacy, but this is probably the most that we can claim for ourselves. Certainly we have brought relatively few to the point of distinction in their use of the language. There is little American writing or public speaking which stands out for its quality of ease and charm as well as intellectual content. Actually, many of our classroom efforts, by concentrating so relentlessly upon the negative—that is, what not to say or write—have undermined the confidence of vast numbers in their ability to command the language. The belief that one's 'grammar' needs improvement is almost universally held in this country, even by those with impeccable educational credentials.

—Albert H. Markwardt

A recent trend in college English departments seems to be the resumption of developmental or remedial classes for students whose skills are not adequate for regular composition classes. Albert Kitzhaber found in 1963 that four-year schools were dropping remedial courses in favor of nonrequired clinics which offered special help,¹

¹Themes, Theories, and Therapy: The Teaching of Writing in College (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 18.

but by 1974 Ron Smith found the trend reversing, perhaps because by then 38% of state schools had open admission policies.² Both two-year schools, with their open admissions policies, and four-year schools, with their special admission minority student programs, are feeling a need for a freshman English course that will meet the needs of students who lack basic language skills. The traditional composition and rhetoric and writing about literature courses are simply not the right kind of beginning courses for developmental students.

In the context of this paper, "developmental" will refer to those students who enter college with verbal skills considerably lower than those of the average freshman student. Many schools still refer to such classes as "remedial," but this latter term seems to connote drill and memorization and seems less applicable to classes for adults, whose learning processes have moved beyond this stage. Thinking of learning as developmental makes clear that it is a process rather than a finished act.

Since nearly all English instructors have some students who are inadequately prepared for their classes, deciding whether two- or four-year schools have the widest academic range of students is difficult. Because of their

²"The Composition Requirement Today: A Report on a Nationwide Survey of Four-year Colleges and Universities," College Composition and Communication, 25 (May, 1974), 141.

open admissions policies, two-year schools probably have more developmental students, but this does not mean that four-year schools, which have at least some kind of admissions policy of exclusion, have all well-prepared students. Because it seems impossible to measure writing skills with an objective test and because admission placement scores are often composites, with poor English scores balanced by high scores in math or science, admission of unprepared students is probable. A survey carried out by the Association of Departments of English in May and June of 1974 showed the following percentages of schools offering special sections or courses of freshman composition for students needing remedial work:

Community Colleges	81.8%
Public Junior Colleges	73.1%
Private Junior Colleges	75.0%
Public Colleges	60.9%
Private Colleges	44.6%
Public Universities	57.0%
Private Universities	50.0% ³

When even half of the private schools presumably requiring high admission scores need to offer remedial classes, it is obvious that a lot of developmental students need help.

³Page Tigar, "ADE Survey of Freshman English," ADE Bulletin, 43 (November, 1974), 18.

These developmental students tend to make more mistakes in grammar and mechanics than do students with higher admission scores. Expecting regular composition classes to meet the needs of developmental students is unwise because composition classes as presently structured do not address themselves to verb errors and other mechanical problems because these classes are designed to improve style and logical thinking. Another possibility, adding units on grammar and mechanics to regular composition classes to meet the extra needs of developmental students, is also a poor choice for two reasons because: first, the students who need less help would be bored, and second, too few English teachers have been trained in grammar and mechanics enough to teach developmental students ways of overcoming these specific weaknesses.

Two basic deterrents to solving the problem of teaching basic verbal skills to developmental students that English departments face are that (1) there is a lack of research on writing and how people learn to write better and (2) what research has been done is not consolidated and listed so it can be helpful to teachers searching for ways of approaching the problem. Not enough research has been done on the details of teaching writing, such as:

What tests are available for placement into composition classes?

Which pre- and posttest programs are useful for individual placement in developmental classes?

Which areas of language skills weakness can be improved through drill alone, and thus free the instructor for teaching less easily taught skills?

Which areas of language skills weakness can be best improved through one-to-one conferences and the writing of actual papers?

Which materials have been tested and evaluated for actual classroom use, and which are a public relations dream?

Several new methods of teaching composition—journals, free writing, and the open classroom—need to be defined at this point, as they will be mentioned as ways of helping developmental students overcome their verbal skills deficiencies. Student journals are well defined in Donald Stewart's The Authentic Voice as "a record of your intellectual and emotional growth."⁴ Students are usually asked to keep a daily record, written out of class. Stewart further explains that journals ought to show how students are responding to their total environment and how they evaluate these responses. As originally intended, journals are

⁴(Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company, 1972), p. 48.

not graded, nor are comments made about the quality of writing in them. The journal method is used to give students practice in expressing themselves in writing without having to worry about grammar and mechanics.

Free writing is another new method of teaching composition which allows students to concern themselves with what they are going to say rather than how they are going to say it. Written in class rather than out of class, free writing exercises often come at the beginning or end of a period when students are able to feel that their time is "free" and unstructured. Students are asked to write without stopping for the designated time period (usually five or ten minutes) and to express whatever thoughts or feelings they have without regard for correctness of grammar or mechanics. Like the journal, free writing is an effective way to encourage students to write something, even if it is ultimately rewritten and revised completely. Another good use for free writing is a form of brainstorming session for theme planning. Often called prewriting when used this way, free writing allows students time to jot down all the things that occur to them about a topic for later organization.

The open classroom as conceived by Lou Kelly of the University of Iowa is a writing class emphasizing the verbal interaction of class members and the communication process involved in writing. Not tied to a rigid syllabus or

texts, participants in an open classroom discuss their writing and their feelings about writing with each other and learn together how to communicate better. I will discuss the University of Iowa program in more detail in Chapter VI.

So far most of the writing done about composition is somewhat narrow and personal; people write about what worked for them in a certain class at one time. That this is an inefficient way to learn about teaching writing—trial and error, one class at a time—can be illustrated by my experiences teaching developmental classes at Texas A & I University, Clayton Junior College, and the University of Florida. In five years of college teaching, I have handled 31 sections of freshman composition, including two honors sections and five developmental sections. My preparation was frighteningly typical—I had taken composition as a freshman myself but never had a grammar course, a rhetoric course, or an advanced composition course. A well-planned syllabus and helpful teachers in my first English department got me started, but essentially I had to learn from experience.

My interest in developmental English began with a class I taught at Texas A & I University in the summer of 1969 after I had had two years of experience teaching freshman composition. The 20 students in the developmental class were mostly from the previous summer quarter's Upward

Bound program and were thus taking the first semester course of college English from me. I quickly discovered that they were not at the level of the regular students I was used to teaching, and since I was only teaching one class that particular session, I took time to experiment and improvise ways of teaching composition to students who lacked some basic skills. At this point I had done no reading in the field and knew little about available materials, so I used the regularly assigned books and only varied the assignments.

A typical class in first semester composition at Texas A & I would have read essays in a typical rhetorical reader and written at least ten in-class themes. At the time, the conventional classroom and traditional techniques for the teaching of English were just beginning to be criticized widely, so I picked up ideas from friends at other schools and tried an open classroom for the first time. I did not use journals with these students, thinking that developmental students might not benefit from them as much as, say, honors students. I know now that I was probably wrong in this since research now suggests that developmental students do benefit from the kind of freedom of expression possible with journals.

On the first day of class, we arranged the chairs in a circle and talked in couples and triads for two ten-minute periods, changing partners in between groups. Then

each person had to introduce the person he had "interviewed" to the rest of the class, telling some interesting detail about him or her. The next class meeting was spent reviewing names and facts about each other.

Because many of the students had been together for five weeks already, the group had a kind of solidarity that usually is lacking in a class, and the group dynamics of this situation contributed to the success of the summer session's work. Of the original 20 students, five were black, five Anglo (including two girls who dropped), and the rest were Chicano. This kind of racial breakdown is rather typical of a developmental class, even though the racial breakdown of all the students at Texas A & I was 2% black and 25% Chicano, more students from racial minorities seem to be from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

During the semester, eight in-class themes were written as usual, but rather than spend time reading the essays assigned other classes, we usually discussed problems of interest to the students in the class—prejudice, the draft, the value of a college degree, etc. From these discussions came the big project—a multimedia presentation in the auditorium one summer night for parents and friends. The general topic was prejudice, and the script and the slides and the tapes were prepared by the students themselves. Because they had been in the government-funded

Upward Bound program, we were able to borrow projectors, tapedecks, and other equipment.

The show consisted of a number of scenes dealing with the way prejudice affected the students. In many ways the scenes effectively depicted the ways today's media influence people's attitudes, and without having formally planned to teach about oral and nonverbal communication, I had students producing a show illustrating rather subtle aspects of both of these areas of communication. The first scene, for example, showed a couple watching TV. They heard game shows, commercials, a report on the assassination of President Kennedy, soap operas, and a report on race riots. All seemed to have the same effect on them. Another vignette dealt with witnesses to an accident where different races were involved. Short scenes also dealt with interracial dating and prejudice in renting and in treatment by store clerks.

The finale of the show, which had been given continuity by tapes and slides in between the changing scenes, was a triple screen slide presentation of photographs taken by the students to such songs as "What the World Needs Now is Love." As far as the participants and the audience were concerned, the show was a great success.

Grades for the course were determined by the theme grades and a project grade assigned partly according to the amount of work put in. Although committees met to plan and write in class, much out-of-class work was involved

to get the equipment, slides, and music together and to rehearse the scenes once they were written.

I had to justify to myself that we were studying something having to do with English. And we were. My students that summer learned to communicate much more clearly by approaching communication in different ways—through pictures, music, and words. Experimental as it was, the script-writing, and the awareness of the communication process involved in putting on the show, helped the students communicate through words arranged in a formal theme. At the end of the semester, they wrote better themes as a result of having worked with words in a less threatening environment than they had been used to. For a first experiment, I think, it worked pretty well. The result of having students for whom English was no longer a greatly feared subject and for whom language now had a new dimension shows that experimentation does have some pragmatic value.

Drawbacks were having to plan as we went along, as I saw how things were working out, and having to rely on ingenuity rather than books. I learned that developmental writing courses demand a great deal of planning as well as more and better materials.

I learned more about developmental writing courses four years later when I taught in Atlanta. The developmental class I taught at Clayton Junior College in the

fall of 1973 showed me need for better placement tests and for individualization of programs. In this two-year school south of Atlanta, Georgia, developmental students take a full program of developmental classes (English, reading, math, and psychology or counseling) for a year before they are considered ready to enter regular classes, and the developmental classes are highly structured.

A continuing problem at Clayton Junior College, as at most schools with developmental programs, is that low scores on college placement tests, such as the SAT and ACT, do not necessarily correlate with actual verbal skills. Of the 14 people enrolled in my English 99 class, three could have been at least "B" students in regular classes, but they had low scores on the national placement test taken the spring before because of personal problems (in one case drug-related). These three were understandably bored with the grammar and punctuation exercises needed by the rest of the class and tended to lose interest and stopped coming to class.

Of the remaining students, five were black and six white. Their language problems, however, can be classified more on the basis of age than of race. The ones who were of freshman age tended to make the same kinds of errors that regular freshmen make, such as comma errors and missing apostrophes, but in greater number than regular students would make these errors. They had the same inability to

develop ideas that regular students have, and they also made many careless spelling and diction errors. These students needed a more concentrated freshman composition course than is usually given. The extra drill in grammar and punctuation probably did them no harm.

The two adults in this class, however, presented special problems—problems which developmental English courses ought to be able to deal with successfully. These two women, one white and one black, came back to school after long absences. The white woman, a housewife who began college after her children were old enough to go to school, had a fairly supportive husband, which helped, but she seemed to be under a lot of pressure from her parents to "learn to write good." A German native, she really did not have a second language problem so much as she had a really low opinion of herself as a writer. Her first theme was only a couple of sentences long because she was so concerned with getting everything right. Students like her need someone to talk to almost as much as they need a knowledgeable person to guide their composing efforts. While the in-class drill helped her, she also benefited by "talking on paper" without regard for correctness (at first) and by the counseling sessions that Clayton Junior College developmental students get through their psychology course.

The black woman, in her forties, was simply overwhelmed by all the new material she had to assimilate. She was so far behind the other students (and so much older) that I think she would have benefited more through individual work than in an organized class. The McGraw-Hill Basic Skills Systems books we used, for example, could have been used on an individual basis with her, putting the emphasis on learning one step at a time to make the material seem less intimidating. I think that all the students I had at Clayton Junior College in the developmental class would have been better off if we had been able to spend the same amount of time (four hours and 20 minutes a week) on individual weaknesses rather than on exercises done by the whole class.

Another problem I could define better after I taught this class, since I also taught regular classes at Clayton Junior College, was that of placement. I had students in my "regular" classes who were limited in writing skills enough to need the help given in the developmental class, and I also had "developmental" students who would have done well in the regular classes. Clayton Junior College has experimented with different kinds of placement tests since 1973, giving both objective and essay tests to try to eliminate this problem.

In the spring of 1974 I taught another developmental class, this time at the University of Florida in

Gainesville, where 95% of a typical freshman class is composed of students with scores in the upper 40% on the Florida Twelfth Grade Placement Test. The other 5% of the class consists of lower scoring students admitted into the special services program. These students take developmental rather than regular classes but receive college credit and grades for the developmental work they do in the program. The eighteen students I taught in the "writers' workshop" had all taken three quarters of developmental freshman English but were still not able to write papers with a college level of literacy. One reason they had gotten this far with such low verbal skills was an apparent discrepancy in grading policy among staff members, for a typical student had failed and repeated one quarter, received a B one quarter, and received a D one quarter.

I planned to use an excellent book on organization with them, Kerrigan's Writing to the Point, assuming that they no longer would be making many mechanical errors. I found instead that they had learned patterns of development fairly well in their previous three quarters even though they still needed some help developing ideas fully enough, but they made many errors in punctuation, noun and verb endings, and spelling. In other words, they were now at the stage where most freshmen begin.

My experiment this time consisted of total individualization. I was only able to accomplish this because

attendance was somewhat erratic as the class was scheduled on the same night that the black fraternities and the choir met. I do not think that it would be possible to spend enough time with each of eighteen students under conditions of full attendance every time. After writing a placement theme, students met with me and discussed their apparent writing problems, for which I would assign exercises and writing assignments designed to help. Each subsequent theme was analyzed in the same spirit of finding areas of weakness that the student needed to be aware of.

I found that correcting mistakes was only part of the problem; the students needed to become able to find their own errors and correct them. They had had enough courses to know how to correct an error once it was pointed out, but finding their own mistakes was a far different matter, so this was what we worked on. I began to stress my feelings about communication: that mistakes are important not because the teacher says so, but because they interfere with the process of communication and the opinion of the writer that the reader gets from the writing.

From this spring class and from the two I taught in the fall of 1974, I learned that materials for developmental classes are not very plentiful. Because problems in writing often go along with problems in reading, most readers for freshman English, as well as many of the

expository composition books, are too hard for such students to read and thus are either not read or not understood. Another problem with available materials for developmental students, since not all developmental students have the same problems with their language skills, is that many programmed texts are designed to be sequential rather than specific. A third problem is that most rhetoric books deal too much with the various types of paragraph and essay development and not enough with the developmental student's usual problem: having something to say at all. The most helpful writing tests for such students stress positive, elementary concerns, such as picking a topic and deciding what aspect of it to discuss.

Just as I discovered by experimenting certain methods that are successful and some that are unsuccessful with developmental students, many authors of articles in College English, College Composition and Communication, Teaching English in the Two-Year College, and Research in the Teaching of English have found methods that help them teach regular freshman and developmental freshman composition classes. The diversity of methods thus shown is useful information to have, of course, but this information needs to be better organized to be most useful. A bibliography of present research could group the various studies done on cassette-recorded theme comments, or the descriptions of free-writing and journal experiments, or the studies of linguistics

and semantics as tools for teaching composition. Instructors wanting to try a certain method could thus quickly find out how it had worked for others instead of trying things on a trial-and-error basis.

Very little investigation has been done on developmental writing classes, however, because my experience has shown me areas of weakness in the present research, my study will be concerned with the following problems and their possible solutions:

1. identifying students who need extra language skills help,
2. placing students in flexible programs so they can learn what they individually need to know,
3. evaluating materials to teach mechanical skills of grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, reading, etc.,
4. evaluating materials and methods of teaching the composing process itself,
5. designing a writing program which can prescribe for student language skills' problems,
6. evaluating some existing writing program for low students, and
7. training graduate assistants to teach students to write.

The 1975 NCTE publication, Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts, is a beginning

consolidation of research on writing, listing tools people have come up with to objectively evaluate language skills problems. My bibliography is a listing of sources discussing teaching college English to developmental students. I have included a number of articles on teaching freshman composition because the techniques discussed are generally equally applicable to developmental students. In many of these cases, in fact, the techniques evolved because students with low verbal skills needed help in learning to write better. More bibliographies of writing are necessary, especially at the college level, because freshman English is usually taught by graduate assistants or relatively inexperienced instructors. These two groups profit from readily available information on methods that have worked for other teachers, since both usually lack formal training in teaching writing. The ADE survey mentioned earlier had department chairpersons complain that "instructors of freshman English are not trained in teaching techniques, and often not even in writing."⁵ As one formerly inexperienced graduate assistant put it:

With an equivalent training far less than any state demands of a sixteen-year-old driver, I began teaching in an immense state university. Any expressions of misgiving were met with the assurances of my employers and of those who had taught for a year or two that

⁵Tigar, p. 14.

I would not have been admitted to the program were I not equal to the task.⁶

This study will be organized according to the parts of the process of education: the student, the subject, the teacher, and the place.

Chapter II deals with the developmental students: How are they placed in a developmental class to begin with? How can their individual needs and weaknesses be ascertained? How can counseling help these students in areas tangentially related to language skills? In this chapter I will also describe the students with verbal skills problems who may need short term help from a developmental writing program, such as upperclassmen and graduate students who may be required to write papers beyond their skills. While the main thrust of the paper is toward developmental composition courses aimed at freshmen, these other students can be served by the right kind of developmental program as well.

Chapters III and IV deal with subject areas: How can grammar and mechanics problems be eliminated? How can problems in the composing process be solved?

Chapter V discusses ways of training more effective composition teachers. At present we're not doing a very

⁶Dennis R. Hall, "Milk from the Bull of Human Kindness; or, A Confessional Note on the Decline of Culture," College English, 36 (April, 1975), 895.

good job of teaching people how to write. Because so few college English teachers are trained to teach composition, much less grammar and other details of writing that developmental students especially must grapple with, developmental classes are often a case of the blind leading the blind. The common university practice of assigning the least experienced teachers to the lowest classes of students compounds this problem. Also in Chapter V, I will deal with features of the developmental writing program other than students, materials, and teachers—such as grades, credit, and other administrative problems. A survey of existing programs for developmental students in two-year and four-year schools indicates that these administrative problems are the subject of a serious division of opinion; whether college credit and college-comparable grades should be given for developmental work are definitely problems that need to be evaluated further.

Chapter VI describes and evaluates nine existing developmental writing programs in an attempt to show what future programs need to do to teach developmental students to write more effectively. What I intend to investigate is the kind of class that would lie between the extremes: neither a purely objective class which drills on material but may not learn to use it, nor a class which is too free, where progress is nearly impossible to measure. I want to avoid error counting (this class improved 20% because the

the students' verb errors decreased that amount) and yet come up with away of evaluating performance.

Developmental students do not just need grammar and mechanics help. They are in a competitive college environment and therefore also need help with organizing their writing and expressing themselves effectively. Some of the methods and texts which have been found useful for teaching regular composition will also be applicable to developmental writing. Some new methods and materials will need to be devised. New ways of organizing courses might be considered so that developmental students could have more flexible schedules and spend the amount of time it takes them to master the subject, even if that length of time is longer or shorter than a regular term. Because I feel that better ways of handling developmental students exist, my paper will investigate ways of teaching such problem students in both two- and four-year schools.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS: PLACEMENT, INDIVIDUALIZATION, COUNSELING

Developmental students need a certain amount of special consideration—labels such as "remedial" or "developmental" given to the classes in which they are placed have a pejorative meaning no matter how the labels are intended. The best way to overcome the feelings of inadequacy in students who already know that they have writing problems is to identify individual weaknesses and to deal with these weaknesses on an individual basis. In addition to wisely chosen exercises and thoughtful criticism, instructors can best help such students with positive, supportive counseling.

According to Sabina Johnson, supervisor of developmental English at the University of California, Berkeley, students placed in developmental classes by their placement test scores have several needs in common: they are deficient in language skills and thus need a more intensive composition course than do regular students, they need to acquire standard English to have linguistic freedom of choice, their vocabularies and sentence patterns are limited, they "have noticeable trouble in thinking clearly and

constructively and observing data accurately," and their writing is voiceless and unfocussed.¹ These students are not necessarily all freshman, as these developmental writing needs can be identified in all ages and classifications of students.

The treatment of such students when they first enter a developmental program in composition can be divided into three areas for discussion: placement, program individualization, and counseling. This division covers most of the students' progress from entrance into the program to their eventual exit when they have attained language skills competency.

Placement

Usually, objective testing is used for twelfth grade placement of prospective freshmen, while essay testing is used for freshman orientation placement.

Objective tests seem to work well to sort out students on the basis of rough differences. The NCTE Research in Written Composition volume summarizes drawbacks of objective testing, but concludes: "If a school department head or college chairman of freshman composition wishes

¹"Remedial English: The Anglocentric Albatross?" College English, 33 (March, 1972), 670-73.

to section large numbers of students according to their predicted success in composition, he probably will find a relatively sound objective test the most efficient instrument. Although some missectioning doubtless will occur, usually the individual students can be reclassified during the first week or two of the year on the recommendation of their teachers."² Richard Braddock and his colleagues feel that individual differences of students can then be taken care of within the already sectioned classes.

The most widely used national test for this kind of objective placement is the Educational Testing Service's College Board English Composition Test. The research behind the test and subsequent validity studies were reviewed in 1967 with the following conclusions: Samuel Becker felt that Fred Godshalk's study, which compared five theme grades and eight objective tests to show that the ETS test was more valid than expected by its critics, was "The best designed and most carefully conducted study of its kind I have ever seen."³ The ETS exam thus seems a useful test for roughly dividing students into groups according to

²Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963), p. 44.

³Samuel L. Becker and Martin Steinmann, Jr., "Review of Fred J. Godshalk's The Measurement of Writing Ability," Research in the Teaching of English, 1 (Spring, 1967), 76.

writing ability, even though critics contend that objective tests generally do not cover items such as "clarity, focus, and analysis of the main idea," or "unity, organization, and content."⁴ Since developmental students tend to have underlying skills' problems which must be taken care of along with improving their composing skills, a low score on an objective test would indicate that the student could use extra help in improving writing skills.

Some sample questions can illustrate the kind of information most national placement tests ask for. The ACT test, for example, bases its English Usage section on sample passages containing errors or inappropriate expressions which students are asked to locate. Usually four choices, one of which is "No Change," are given as alternatives for the given expression. A possible advantage of this type of question is that it makes allowances for context which some other types of questions do not. Over one-third of the questions on the nearly three-hour ACT test are in the English Usage section. Since the social studies and natural sciences sections also consist of answering questions over reading selections, the entire test would be difficult for students of low verbal ability.

The verbal part of the SAT test consists of eighty questions theoretically divided among the following four

⁴Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, pp. 42-43.

areas: vocabulary, word relationships, sentence completion, and reading comprehension. The first three of these categories are all primarily ways of testing vocabulary, however. The vocabulary questions on the verbal part of the SAT are often of the antonym type, in which students are asked to recognize words opposite in meaning. A sample choice would be "Chronic: (A) slight, (B) temporary, (C) wholesome, (D) patient, (E) pleasant."⁵ The sentence completions are again vocabulary questions, requiring students to choose the word that best fits in with the meaning of the entire sentence, as: "From the first the islanders, despite an outward _____, did what they could to _____ the ruthless occupying power. (A) harmony..assist, (B) enmity..embarass, (C) rebellion..foil, (D) resistance..destroy, (E) acquiescence..thwart." Analogies, a third type of vocabulary question, ask students to recognize pairs of words that are related. This type does require more critical ability than the other types of vocabulary questions since the comparison may be between an abstract pair of words and a concrete pair of words. A typical analogy question is: "Crutch: locomotion:: (A) paddle: canoe, (b) hero: worship, (C) horse: carriage, (D) spectacle: vision, (E) statement: contention." About half

⁵Samuel C. Brownstein and Mitchel Weiner, Barron's How to Prepare for College Entrance Examinations, 7th ed. (Woodbury, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1974), p. 21.

of the testing time for the verbal part of the SAT is devoted to the reading comprehension section, in which passages are followed by questions asking students to "find the central thought of a selection, find specific detail mentioned in the passage, find implications and draw inferences from the text, determine the meaning of strange words as used in the text, determine the mood of the writer, and determine the special techniques used by the author to achieve his effects." While a student might be able to prepare for the other sections of the verbal part of the SAT by studying vocabulary words, suffixes, affixes, and roots, this section demands fairly well-developed reading skills.

Because the verbal part of the SAT did not include an error-identification section, in 1974 a 30-minute section was added consisting of 50 grammar and usage questions on standard written English. Rather than being part of the admission test score, this part is intended as a placement test for freshman English courses and asks students to recognize "fragmentary and run-on sentences; errors in number, case, agreement, sequence of tenses; weaknesses in style such as lack of parallel structure, dangling constructions, and faulty diction, and improper use of punctuation."⁶ This new addition to the ETS test gives English

⁶Brownstein and Weiner, pp. 22, 23, 116, and 311.

departments a further way of placing students in developmental classes if their basic language skills are low, since the questions on the standard written English test cover fundamental problem areas.

Even if such questions don't really deal with students' abilities to think clearly and express themselves effectively, low scores on tests made up of similar questions do identify students with problems in mastery of the conventions of English expressions. The aim of such placement tests is to give admissions offices a general idea of a student's background in a subject area; they succeed in fulfilling this aim because some skills connected with writing ability, such as vocabulary and reading comprehension, can be objectively tested with a high degree of reliability.

If only one kind of placement test can be given, research has repeatedly shown that "one good objective test will correlate more highly with a student's writing ability (using a series of writing samples as a base) than will one good essay test."⁷ To really measure college skill in writing, however, an essay ought to be part of any writing placement test. Any teacher of English recognizes

⁷Edward M. White, "Equivalency Testing in College Freshman English," in ed. Forrest D. Burt and Sylvia King, Equivalency Testing: A Major Issue for College English (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1974), p. 34.

that some students who can do reasonably well on an objective test may not be able to write acceptably and vice versa.

Essay tests are most frequently used as a placement tool during some kind of orientation week. Combined with objective test scores, an essay test can provide a more current check of a student's writing competency than the objective test taken in high school and may thus help with more accurate placement. If essays from all incoming freshmen must be graded under time pressure by the English department staff, however, the general result will again be a testing instrument adequate only for rough grouping, dealing little with individual differences. "Even under the most carefully controlled and supervised reading conditions it is hard to find readers who agree consistently about the quality of given essays."⁸ Since student writing may also vary widely in quality depending on the topic assigned or other more physical variables, essay tests are best used as a check on objective test scores rather than as the only criterion for placement.

A flexible developmental composition program must allow for placement mistakes because testing instruments for a subjective area like writing are not and cannot be

⁸White, p. 36.

perfectly reliable. Usually enough flexibility can be gained by allowing instructors to move students from developmental to regular sections or from regular to developmental sections during the first week of classes as they discover from writing samples that students were incorrectly placed.

Even a group of students with similarly low scores on a placement test will not have homogeneous writing skills problems, however, so individualizing class instruction is of paramount importance in dealing with developmental students.

Individualization

Tests

Individualization of a classroom of students can be accomplished through various diagnostic tests which establish what each student's particular needs are as far as grammar and mechanics are concerned. If a test such as the SRA Junior College English Placement test is given, it can be scored by computer so that each student receives an analysis of his or her score as it relates to his or her specific weaknesses in writing skills. This is the method used by Florida State University.

A national test need not be given, of course. For example, Tallahassee Community College has designed its

own test consisting of 100 questions. Called the Diagnostic Inventory, it, too, is computer-scored after students record their responses on IBM cards. There are ten questions in each of the following common error areas: spelling; subject-verb agreement; words frequently misused; commas; pronoun reference; capitals, abbreviations and end marks; punctuating quotations and conversations; using apostrophes; and fragments. There are five questions each about misplaced modifiers and parallel structure. The general instructions direct students to look for the errors identified in the heading for each section and to mark on their card whether each sentence has an error of that kind. Fifty minutes are allowed for completion of the test. Sample questions follow:

Spelling: Jack has not been studing enough to graduate.

Agreement: Either Betty or Jane are going to the party with us.

Diction: The girls carefully sat the vase of flowers on the table.

Commas: We need both a record player, and a projector.

Pronoun reference: Neither of the boys could find their books.

Capitals, abbreviations, and end marks: John likes german cooking very much.

Punctuating quotations and conversations: "We need more fuel." Bob reported, "both wood and coal."

Using apostrophe: The teams captain's met with the referee for the coin toss.

Fragments: Each winter the Greeks seeing the vine die.

Misplaced modifiers: The hikers stopped feeling the earthquake plodding up the hill.

Parallel structure: The boy, in great fear and shaken by the ordeal, collapsed after the rescue.⁹

Each student is given a summary of errors according to the number and percentage made in each section of the test, so an instructor can begin immediately to assign exercises and programmed materials that will begin to help the student correct the problem.

Use of Student Writing

If a developmental writing instructor doesn't wish to give a complete diagnostic test at the beginning of the term, feeling perhaps that developmental students need a more positive experience at the beginning than another test, individual weaknesses may be ascertained through the student's writing. Using student writing errors for individualization, an instructor would assign either exercises or part of a programmed text on the most prevalent error in a paper first and continue to assign exercises on different

⁹Tallahassee Community College English Department, unpublished mimeographed TCC English Diagnostic Inventory Test.

types of errors as the student improves in the earlier areas of weakness. The problem with this method is the amount of teacher time demanded; students must return to the instructor for constant checking and analysis. My bibliography of helpful materials in the Appendix should be useful to either a teacher trying to use this method or a teacher of regular composition trying to help students with occasional problems of grammar and punctuation.

A better way that classrooms can be organized to meet the needs of the individual rather than the group is by using materials with pre- and posttests of various skills involved in writing. Exercises can then be assigned on the basis of individual weaknesses, and personal progress can be made. Using either a diagnostic test or programmed materials rather than the more hit-and-miss instructor-assigned exercises has another advantage according to educational researchers because these methods produce a clear idea of work that is expected from the student.

Research suggests that developmental students produce better work if they know exactly what is expected of them. H. Evans and E. Dubois point out that the most successful programs for developmental students focus on individual weaknesses and clearly state objectives so that the students know what is expected in the way of progress

and instructor demands.¹⁰ David Martin concurs, stating that "the essential part of a corrective program is definiteness."¹¹ After some kind of diagnostic analysis has been done and the student is aware of the areas he or she needs to work on, this definiteness can be attained by directing the student to programmed materials, where he or she can work at his or her own pace to correct the problems.

Programmed Materials

Some programmed materials contain their own workable diagnostic tests. An example would be Individualized English, Set J, compiled by J. N. Hook and William H. Evans. An 88-question pretest and an 88-question posttest over basic grammar and punctuation problems are keyed to 88 cards of exercises corresponding to the test questions by area. There are 23 questions on parts of speech (word choices); 28 on sentence structure; 29 on punctuation; and seven on italics, capitalization, and numbers. Basically a simple review, the set would enable an instructor to assign immediately helpful exercises according to areas of weakness as diagnosed by the pretest.

¹⁰"Community/Junior College Remedial Programs—Reflection," Journal of Reading (October, 1972), pp. 38-45.

¹¹"Teaching Reading in a Community College—A Remedial Activity," Journal of Reading (March, 1971), p. 369.

An extra feature of this particular program, which ought to be attractive to instructors and administrators because it cuts costs, is that it is nonconsumable, requiring the students to furnish their own paper. Too many of the early individualized programs were publisher and salesmen's dreams because they required materials to be replaced for each student who used them.

Other programmed materials are more sequential and seem correspondingly less adaptable for use with developmental students, for just as a whole class will not need an exercise on capitalization, students will not need a whole course in grammar and mechanics just because they are in developmental sections. An example of such a sequential text would be the McGraw-Hill Writing Skills I book, which is part of the basic skills system series. At least the volumes in this series might be used by chapters rather than continuing from the beginning to the end. In contrast, some very good programmed texts are most useful with foreign students because the program writers did such a thorough job of writing the program in a logical order that the parts can't be used separately, and thus the texts are not as useful to developmental students. Ralph Loewe's The Writing Lab is a book of this type. The Writing Skills I book, however, could be divided into its seven chapters and assigned where needed. The chapters in this basic book are as follows: sentences and clauses, .

verb tenses, singular and plural, subject and object pronouns, adjectives and adverbs, capitalization, and punctuation. As long as a student can identify the verb in a sentence, for example, he or she could begin with the chapter on verb tenses and work through the program. Each question is followed by an answer block which the student can check before going to the next question.

It seems to me that a text like David Jacobson's Program for Revision is better for adult developmental students because it assumes that they have been exposed to the material before and therefore does not begin with simple questions. Jacobson has a short lesson at the beginning of each section, a pretest, exercises, and a posttest. In four early chapters he covers pronoun, subject-verb-complement, modifier, and coordinating conjunction identification to make sure that background material is included for those who need it, but the rest of the chapters are on more common problems of developmental students: capitals, noun and verb endings, apostrophes, pronoun agreement, adjectives and adverbs, punctuating and arranging modifiers, punctuating coordinating parts, working with coordinates, making comparisons. He ends with three chapters dealing with the whole sentence: fragments, run-ons, and consistency. It is a useful text which can be used as needed by a student. It gets results and is not boring.

Conferences

Another way of individualizing classes is to teach on a one-to-one basis through conferences. If time is available, conferences are definitely a good method of teaching writing, especially to developmental students, since individual differences can be truly accounted for.

A total conference method was tried by Lester Fisher and Donald Murray in 1972 at the University of New Hampshire. They used the students' writing as the subject matter for the course: 500-1000 words a week for eleven weeks, plus a 1250-2500 word final paper. No late papers were accepted, and if two papers were missing, the student was dropped from the course. A major revision counted as a new paper. Since Fisher and Murray felt that the element of personal choice forces students to think and become better writers through having to be original and at least somewhat creative, the students chose their own subjects and the audience towards which the writing was directed. Each paper was accompanied by a beginning statement of the objective of the paper and by a concluding evaluation by the student of whether, or how well, he had achieved his or her purpose. (This objective evaluation step might be a good one to use in classes for all freshmen, since lack of clearness of purpose is a problem in all student writing.)

Students were encouraged to write about their own experiences and seemed to open up throughout the term as the conferences went on. They received no weekly grades, but chose their best papers at the end for their final evaluation. Competing only with themselves, they seemed to gain confidence, and, say Fisher and Murray, "those who tried improved."¹²

The conference method is also used at Florida State University in some of the regular freshman composition classes. Each student in such a tutorial class sees an instructor once a week for 15 minutes of intensive, personal work.

The total conference method would have to be carefully explained to both students and instructors to be used with developmental students, of course, since attendance and promptness are particular problems with this group. If self-responsibility and individual attention were stressed from the beginning, however, the method might work very well, as it would provide the personal touch most students miss at a large university and offer individual help with specific problems in writing.

Certainly the instructor could devote more intensive time to each student since the time used for class

¹²,"Perhaps the Professor Should Cut Class," College English, 35 (November, 1973), 173.

preparation and for grading papers outside of class will now be available for conferences. According to Fisher and Murray, a traditional teacher spends three hours in the classroom, six hours on preparation and three hours in conference; the instructor who is individualizing will spend about six hours in conference per class of 15 to 20 instead.

This statistical problem is the main drawback of the conference method; ideal for one or two classes, it would be impossible for a real class load of three to five sections of 25 students each. The average freshman instructor would really be pressed for time to see all registered students in any meaningful way.

Despite this obvious flaw, the conference method seems one that could be used in at least a modified form, since the program combines the best of the individualizing programs and gives personal attention to students.

Peer Evaluation

A fifth way of individualizing teaching so that each student's weaknesses are ascertained and strengthened is that of peer evaluation. The general theory behind several peer evaluation experiments is that students are able to correct and revise other students' papers better than their own, and that criticism from peers is easier to take and thus leads to greater improvement than does teacher criticism.

Two recent dissertations elaborate on statistical proof that peer evaluation improves student writing, especially in the areas of grammar and usage. Carter Cramer of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana felt that the improvement in writing found when students were evaluated by their peers came from an increased sense of writing for a real audience (as opposed to the instructor, who is more judge than audience).¹³ Bob Ford used a highly structured experimental format at the University of Oklahoma, with pre- and posttests, a control group and a student-graded group, and many statistical measurements, to discover that the student-graded group made significantly higher gains in their grammar/usage ability than the control group.¹⁴

An excellent textbook on the peer judging method is Peter Elbow's Writing Without Teachers. He deals more with the composing process than with the correction of mechanical errors but feels that his method is valuable in teaching better writing. He envisions classes of about ten that will get together weekly for ten weeks for two or three hours and read their writing and discuss the writing problems they find. These will not be objective,

¹³Essays Toward the Teaching of Composition in a Technological Age," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1972).

¹⁴"The Effects of Peer Editing/Grading on the Grammar-Usage and Theme-Composition Ability of College Freshmen," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1973).

correctness-based discussions, but a matter of sharing feelings and immediate responses to the writing of others so that they can see whether they reached their audience in the way they had intended.¹⁵

Because developmental students need help with more than awareness of audience response, the peer judging method would have to be used in concern with more objective methods, but the emphasis on the writer's purpose is definitely usable with developmental students. Peer judging would be one way of reinforcing the positive attitudes which developmental students need to learn.

The five ways of individualizing developmental classes—diagnostic testing, analysis of student writing, programmed materials, conferences, and peer evaluation—are all ways in which specific student needs can be met. The traditional composition class does not meet the disparate needs of developmental students because not enough time can be given to individual problems in such a class.

Counseling

Correcting grammar and mechanics errors and teaching improvements in the composing process are not the only areas teachers of developmental students need to cover.

¹⁵(New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

More than regular freshmen, these students need help in adjusting to going to school. Many developmental students are from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds; some are older than regular students; all have had some problems with learning in the past that they now hope to overcome. Because of these extra problems, developmental students profit from counseling.

One kind of counseling for developmental students occurs when they are grouped in blocks of classes, as at Clayton Junior College in Atlanta. There, developmental students take reading, composition, psychology, and math their first quarter. The psychology course is really a counseling session to help students adjust to their new learning environment, but this course may be the most useful of the four because of its content.

A strong point of many two-year college developmental student programs, counseling is one feature four-year schools could borrow with good effects. Two-year schools realize that developmental students need as much help with their self-images as they do with their math, English, and reading, and thus these schools emphasize counseling. Much of teaching composition to freshmen anywhere turns out to be conferences in which writing is less often the subject of discussion than personal adjustment problems that have been the subjects of compositions.

Two studies seem to bear out the conclusion that counseling needs to be a primary feature of any developmental program for students to achieve maximum benefits. Michael Kressy of Mt. Wachusett Community College in Gardner, Massachusetts, points out that most community college students are realistic and successful in their own occupational fields and rightly resent being placed in purely remedial drill-type classes. Since these students are more connected to the real world than the average four-year college student, he says, it is important to accept them on their own terms and to try giving each one "confidence in his own perceptions"¹⁶ rather than emphasizing the mistakes and the gaps in their verbal knowledge.

The other study, a survey of developmental students admitted under the 5% ruling at the University of Florida, used by Myers-Briggs test of personality type to show that these students benefit much more from counseling than average students. These special students might have trouble with abstract subjects, aren't interested in subjects for which they can see no actual use, and work best with plenty of praise and encouragement. Since these same

¹⁶"The Community College Student: A Lesson in Humility," College English, 32 (April, 1971), 772-77.

students tend to be very people-oriented and fairly responsible, with counseling they often become very conscientious students.¹⁷

A point worth stressing about developmental students is made in the Sabina Johnson article cited at the beginning of the chapter: "Remedial English students have the same academic potential as other college students."¹⁸ Such students do not need a program consisting only of grammar, mechanics, and basic paragraph patterns; they also need to be stimulated to think and write at their best level. Placement tests are only a rough means of placing students in classes according to their verbal skills abilities. After this placement, the developmental program must stress individualization so that each student's needs are met. Counseling help needs to be offered along with the academic material so that the students will become better adjusted to the college environment. The next two chapters will discuss specific ways in which the weaknesses of developmental students' writing can be removed.

¹⁷Janet Larsen, "Personality Variables in the Teaching-Learning Process," paper delivered at the American Educational Research Association meeting, Chicago, Illinois, February, 1974.

¹⁸p. 671.

CHAPTER III

WEAKNESSES IN WRITING SKILLS

Once low students are placed in special writing classes and programs are set up to deal with individual weaknesses, problem areas can be classified.

Problems

The most obvious problem of low students is the frequency of errors in grammar, mechanics, spelling, and diction. This is the problem most instructors are least prepared to cope with, since as English majors, they themselves probably make few such errors and have been expected to take few or no classes in grammar or linguistics.

One common trap in dealing with skills weaknesses is to prescribe exercises and drill for their own sake, saying in effect to the student, "teach yourself now what you didn't learn in years of instruction." This structured approach is probably most common in older schools, where "grammar" is seen as the answer to all writing problems. The introductory questionnaire I use with classes asks students what problems they see in their writing; generally

at least half of the developmental students say they must "need to learn more grammar."

It does not speak well for their past experiences in English classes that students identify all writing with error-counting. On the other hand, certain errors that interfere with communication have got to be weeded out. Students need to be convinced of the efficacy of nonoffending or nondistracting written communication, but this goal need not require that English departments demand only "standard" English.

While mere error-counting can be misleading, since such statistics depend on personal views of usage and may be skewed by the number of opportunities to make the error compared to the number of times the error is actually made, some generalizations about types of errors made by students are helpful in choosing and designing materials for use with low students.

Richard Braddock of the University of Iowa recommends reporting frequency of a type of error per 100 or 1,000 words and suggests that "more investigators employing frequency counts should focus their studies on narrower, more clearly defined areas and explore them more thoroughly and carefully."¹ John Higgins of York College of the City

¹Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer, p. 21.

University of New York uses a modification of this type of frequency count in taking 100 freshman placement papers and establishing which errors are frequent enough to require inclusion in a text or workbook designed to help the low student. He concludes that no existing text or workbook meets the need so far. He also found that certain items always included in handbooks—who/whom, capitalization, misplaced modifiers—could be considerably deemphasized. His list agrees with one I have compiled in my years of teaching composition. Higgins' list of common errors is shown in Table 1.

Higgins' list gives some idea of problems the instructor teaching low students must deal with to improve student skills. Fortunately the errors he found can be grouped to some extent and thus dealt with as a smaller number of related problems. Areas of interest to a developmental composition teacher in this kind of classification would be:

- spelling
- diction (vocabulary)
- apostrophes
- quotation marks
- verb endings, subject-verb agreement
- pronoun agreement, pronoun reference
- comma/semicolon usage

Two of these seven areas lend themselves to individual drill for improvement—spelling and vocabulary. Albert Kitzhaber points out that "Spelling is the only aspect

Table 1
Higgins' List of Common Grammar
and Mechanical Errors

Fault	% of all papers in which fault occurred	% of all papers in which fault recurred
Misspelling (excluding homonyms)	83	64
Inappropriate contraction	78	55
Inappropriate use of verb <u>get</u>	69	50
Missing comma(s) around parenthetical (including nonrestrictive) element	65	34
Redundancy	64	36
Missing possessive apostrophe	62	21
Misspelling of homonym	57	30
Missing needed comma following introductory element	57	27
Poor subordination or coordination	53	26
Pronoun-antecedent nonagreement or general shift in number	53	16
Inappropriate use of noun <u>thing</u>	52	30
Vague pronoun reference	52	11
Run-together sentence (with or without comma)	50	27
Missing needed comma before coordinate conjunction	48	16
Sentence fragment	45	20

Table 1 - continued

Fault	% of all papers in which fault occurred	% of all papers in which fault recurred
Shift in person	45	20
Miscellaneous superfluous comma	44	27
Wrong meaning of word	39	18
Nonparallel structure	38	8
Miscellaneous inappropriate colloquialism	37	13
Word substitution (usually inadvertent, e.g., "He hid it <u>is</u> the closet" for <u>in</u>)	37	10
Subject-verb nonagreement	36	15
Wrong or missing ending on regular verb form	35	20
Miscellaneous omission of word	35	10
Unidiomatic preposition	33	7
Wrongly included or omitted noun ending (excluding possessive)	31	13

Source: John A. Higgins, "Remedial Students' Needs vs. Emphases in Text-Workbooks," College Composition and Communication, 24 (May, 1973), 187-92.

of composition where programming has appeared to be clearly superior to present methods of instruction."²

A typical spelling program is Brown and Pearsall's Better Spelling: Fourteen Steps to Spelling Improvement. It has a pretest and a posttest, with both tests based on error groups rather than learning lists of words in alphabetical order. Chapters in the text are based on the groups of errors, so an instructor can assign only those chapters which are necessary to a student after he has taken the pretest. Similarly Spelling 1500 has 80 units which correspond to 80-word pre- and posttests so that problem areas can be assigned to students with spelling problems. My materials bibliography in the Appendix lists these books as well as several others containing efficient spelling programs. Instructors also ought to be aware of Donald W. Emery's Variant Spellings in Modern American Dictionaries, which lists forms of words found acceptable in different dictionaries widely used by students and teachers. Emery's point is not that any spelling is acceptable, but that an instructor ought to be aware of different forms so that students aren't criticized for simply looking up the spelling in a different source. Jeweler, for example, is the first entry in all cited dictionaries, but jeweller

²Themes, Theories, and Therapy: The Teaching of Writing in College (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 88.

is listed without usage qualification in the New Collegiate, New World, and Standard College dictionaries and as British in the American Heritage and Random House dictionaries.³ Students with real spelling problems can be helped through drill and programmed texts rather than needing instructor conferences, however.

Kitzhaber mentions also that some aspects of conventional grammar and mechanics may be taught through drill. Apostrophes and quotation marks would surely fall in this latter category, since the rules governing their use are fairly arbitrary.

Apostrophes, for example, are found in possessives and in contractions according to fairly simple rules. "Before adding the apostrophe to show ownership, you must decide whether the word is singular or plural. To singular words, add the apostrophe and s. To plural words ending in s, add only the apostrophe. To plural words ending in other letters, add the apostrophe and s," or "A contraction combines two words into one. The apostrophe indicates that one or more letters have been omitted,"⁴ seem to me to be straightforward rules that can be taught by drill and exercises without much deep thought and

³(Rev. ed.; Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1973), p. 75.

⁴Ralph E. Loewe, The Writing Clinic (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), pp. 195-196.

conference on the instructor's part. Areas of weakness often found are in differentiating between its and it's and they're and there or their, but the problem is one of not remembering to proofread rather than misunderstanding the concept in most cases.

In similar manner, quotation mark rules are standardized, so much that some texts include a chart of where to put the other punctuation at the end of a quotation. It isn't a matter for extended conference; the students need to know what standard usage is and learn to follow it. ("If the quotation ends in a comma or period, put the comma or period INSIDE the closing quote mark; if the quotation ends with a colon or a semicolon, put the colon or semicolon OUTSIDE the closing quote mark.")⁵

Problems in verb endings and subject-verb agreement seem to me to be more often aural than conceptual and are best dealt with by discussing with individual students the differences between oral and written communication.

The two pronoun problems can best be tackled through the use of examples. Pronoun agreement and reference are types of errors in which the best improvement seems to be gained by simply getting students to be aware of their pronouns—they know which ones to use if they just take the care to check each instance of use.

⁵Marilyn B. Gilbert, Clear Writing (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1972), p. 254.

One of the best treatments of pronoun agreement and reference I have found is in Unit 4 of David Jacobson's Program for Revision. He spends 28 pages of alternating exercises and discussion on the topic of pronouns. I have used the unit with developmental students and find that it is self-contained; students can work through the unit and solve their problems with pronouns without much instructor help. The exercises are simple. For example, the sentence given the student to correct, "A person will have to learn a lot if they expect to get through college," is very similar to sentences students with a pronoun problem will write in their themes.⁶ The only thing lacking from Jacobson's treatment of pronouns is a study of collective nouns. Since collective nouns cause problems for writers far more advanced than most developmental students, the problem is probably well omitted. Once a developmental student can handle the simpler pronoun rules, the concept of collective nouns might be introduced.

Comma and semicolon usage is a real problem area because of the differences between comma frequency in informal and formal writing and because of the apparent confusion over subordinating elements of a sentence. It seems to me that one cause of this confusion has been the

⁶(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), pp. 81-109.

overemphasis on grammatical terminology in English classrooms. Rather than differentiate between comma and semi-colon usage on the basis of how a sentence presents its information, teachers seem to be bent on confusing students with labels such as compound, complex, compound-complex, subordinating conjunction, coordinating conjunction, and so on. The other cause of the confusion is the difference in punctuation required in General and Formal usage of English. According to Porter Perrin's Writers' Guide and Index to English (4th edition), for example, the trend in General English today is for "rather open punctuation, using the marks conventionally expected and only as many more as may be required for clarity." Usage differs in that Formal English adds a comma "between a long subject and its verb," "between the clauses of a compound sentence connected by and, nor, or, yet," "after a subordinate clause or long phrase that precedes the main clause," and "before the last item of . . . a series."⁷

Much of this problem area can be cleared up by reasoned use of a good handbook and exercises, but I think students might get the point better the less terminology is used. If they figure out what the sentence is doing, they will be able to punctuate it whether they can label all the words or not.

⁷(Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1965), pp. 388, 390, 805.

Some New Solutions

In addition to numerous new texts and workbooks specifically designed for low students, researchers are currently trying out new ways of teaching writing skills.

The Christensen Method

In 1968 Francis Christensen of Northern Illinois University in Dekalb proposed a method which uses free modifiers to improve style. Christensen's method attempts to integrate grammar and literature by basing composing practice on the models of professional writers of "unquestioned literary merit." He feels that his method of teaching gives insight into style that helps students study literature more closely at the same time their own writing is becoming more mature. Christensen found that the most interesting and significant feature of sentences in contemporary prose was what he called "free modifiers." Often called sentence modifiers, these free modifiers are the "principal working unit of the professional writer. It is these modifiers, not subordinate clauses, that make it possible for him to say much in little—to make his writing concrete and specific without making it prolix, to get the movement or rhythm that is the life of prose."⁸

⁸The Christensen Rhetoric Program, Teacher's Manual (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. vi.

Using four basic principles—addition, direction of modification or direction of movement, levels of generality, texture—Christensen reviews grammatical constructions used as free modifiers and then builds up students' "repertoire of usable constructions and sentence types, covering descriptive narrative, and expository writing." At the end of the course students also analyze paragraphs to understand how well-written sentences work together to form a paragraph.

The second method may be best described through examples. An example of a base clause with final modifiers is: "He stood at the edge of the packed dooryard in the flat thrust of sunrise, looking at the ground washed clean and smooth and trackless, feeling the cool mud under his toes." (Two final modifiers.) Medial and initial modifiers are also worked with, of course. Students would be expected to learn to divide the sentence into the base clause and the modifiers as follows:

Base clause: "He stood at the edge of the packed dooryard in the flat thrust of sunrise"

Final modifiers: "looking at the ground washed clean and smooth and trackless" and "feeling the cool mud under his toes."

It is Christensen's contention that if students practice analyzing sentences written by professional writers in this way and form their own sentences like each model, they will become more mature writers. His examples are

all from professional writers; his method is highly structured, including a script, overhead transparencies, and a workbook for students. One advantage of such an obviously well-thought-out method is that it could be used by an inexperienced teacher and still approximate Christensen's results. It was his theory that student writing could become more mature simply by using free modifiers to make the prose more concrete and specific.

A number of researchers since 1968 have evaluated this teaching method with different results. R. D. Walshe, who used the method at Sutherland Shire Evening College in Sydney, felt that the program had more good than bad (citing especially the chapters on the process of narration and the process of description as good) but that it needed modification because it was too systematic and gave no choices in answers deemed appropriate. He did feel that keeping base clauses short and adding free modifiers set off by punctuation was a good method for students to learn; his students felt that they really gained a practical insight into sentence structure.⁹

Three 1972 studies evaluated the Christensen method very favorably. Carl Hazen compared the Christensen Rhetoric Program and a traditional write and revise

⁹"Report on a Pilot Course on the Christensen Rhetoric Program," College English, 32 (April, 1971), 783-789.

program at North Texas State University. After measuring improvement in ten skills—organization, idea, development, tone, expository style, reasoning, sentence structure, usage, punctuation, and spelling—he concluded that the Christensen method is better for teaching composition than the traditional write and revise method. He did note that more writing improvement occurred for females than for males under both methods.¹⁰

Charles Bond of Ferris State College also found the Christensen method a helpful one for teaching writing. He used two groups of students which were alike in size and verbal background and had both groups write pre- and posttest themes. Using multiple graders, he found that all agreed that the Christensen method group made the greatest improvement in writing ability. Other advantages he found were that the method could be applied to any size group or to team teaching, and that students evaluated the method very favorably.¹¹

Tyree Miller investigated the use of the Christensen method at Ball State University with black students

¹⁰"The Relative Effectiveness of Two Methodologies in the Development of Composition Skills in College Freshman English," (Ph.D. dissertation, North Texas State University, 1972).

¹¹"A New Approach to Freshman Composition: A Trial of the Christensen Method," College English, 33 (March, 1972), 623-627.

and concluded that it was effective in that students seemed to expand their ideas after being exposed to the program. His students were superior to traditionally-taught students in their use of free modifiers, and a follow-up study showed that they retained this good effect after leaving the program.¹²

In 1974, however, Elaine Chaika of Providence College in Rhode Island spoke out against the use of the Christensen program with low students since she feels that this group needs to learn to write more coherent core sentences before they begin to add free modifiers and emulate professional writers. She devised, instead of a system of free modifiers, sets of sentences showing different acceptable ways of saying the same thing, so that students could learn sentence variety on a very simple level:

Max planted corn in the garden.

- a. Corn was planted in the garden by Max.
- b. The garden was planted with corn by Max.
- c. Max planted the garden with corn.

Chaika feels that students need to overcome problems with syntax ("Pollution loses lives" is an example of such a

¹²"A Quantitative Study of the 'Free Modifiers' in Narrative-Descriptive Compositions Written by Black College Freshmen After Leaving the Influence of The Christensen Rhetoric Program and a Study of Their Attitudes Toward Written Composition," (Ph.D. dissertation, Ball State University, 1972).

student sentence) before they move on to the more complicated matters.¹³

Because it was one of the first complete programs, the Christensen method was seen as a real breakthrough in new ways of teaching composition. Like most pattern-imitating methods, it seems to get good results with most students, but my experience with low students leads me to believe that the Christensen method might be above them. After some of the more basic problems are smoothed out, developmental students could benefit from the kind of experience with more mature forms the method provides. Until a student can identify and use subjects and verbs, free modifiers are too much to expect. I also question whether today's students would react favorably to the reading of a rather involved script along with the use of transparencies. The advantage of the format might be (for low students) that large group lectures could be combined with more personal attention in small groups during the rest of the week.

Sentence Combining

A modification of Christensen's idea which allowed students to "explore the stylistic options available in

¹³"Who Can Be Taught?" College English, 35 (February, 1974), 575-83.

written English," is the new method known as sentence combining. Researched by Kellogg Hunt, John Mellon and Frank O'Hare, using sentence combining in a classroom seems to "increase elaborate and diversified structures" in the students' writing. According to William Strong of Utah State University, whose Sentence Combining textbook is now being used in the excellent writing lab at Florida State University, using sentence combining in teaching composition produces students who write "better" sentences as follows:

1. Increasing modification of nouns by large clusters of adjectives, relative clauses, and reduced relative clauses,
2. Increasing use of nominalizations other than nouns and pronouns for subjects and objects (clauses and infinitival and gerundive constructions, all increasingly unique), and
3. The embedding of sentences to an increasing depth.

He cautions that his method "is neither a panacea nor a complete composition program in itself. It is better viewed as a skill-building adjunct to regular composition work."¹⁴ He feels that students should be taught that sentence combining is an option in writing rather than that embedded sentences ought to be written all the time.

¹⁴Sentence Combining, Instructor's Manual (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 2-4.

A short example of the way sentence combining works is as follows: Given the kernel sentences (1) The writer is young, (2) The writer is developing, (3) The writer works with options, a student might practice sentence combining and come up with at least four different sentences. The four possible transformations might be (1) The young, developing writer works with options, (2) The young writer who is developing works with options, (3) The writer who is young and developing works with options, or (4) Options are worked with by the young, developing writer. The emphasis in the practice of sentence combining is that there are various possibilities of combination that are useful to the writer; some transformations may be more useful in some contexts than others. Strong arranges his kernel sentences into clusters to help beginners group kernels that can be successfully combined, as follows:

Coffee

1. He sips at his coffee cup.
2. The cup is chipped along the rim.
3. The taste is bitter.
4. The taste is acidic.
5. The taste is faintly soapy.
6. There is a film.
7. The film is brown.
8. The film is on the inside of his cup.
9. He takes extra care.
10. The care is so that he doesn't spill any on his clothes.

11. He is afraid.
12. The fear ^{is} that it might eat holes in the material.¹⁶

A student would first make combinations of the clusters 1 and 2, 3, 4, and 5, and so on and then attempt to combine these sentences into more complex sentences. Not every combination will be a good one, but learning about choices is part of the method.

The real advantage of Strong's book over Christensen's, it seems to me, is that writing choices are stressed by the variety of ways that sentences can be combined. As one part of a program to improve writing skills, sentence combining could be very valuable.

The Linguistic Approach

Sabina Johnson, supervisor of developmental English at the University of California at Berkeley, uses language as the content of her composition course for low students. Themes are written on an imaginary myth of the creation of language, on the relationship of style of language used to the reader or audience expected, on the ways slanted writing can be avoided (here three versions are written on one subject, one on each side and one neutral, to show the power of word choice), and on paraphrasing items into

¹⁵Strong, p. 11.

different language styles. The stress is on a positive atmosphere which stresses the internalized rules of grammar and language structure—what the students know, rather than what they do not know.

The linguistic method used by Ms. Johnson encourages students by placing the emphasis on what they can do and gives added advantages of being evocative subject matter (based on the students' own experiences) and stressing the relationship between the speaker and his attitudes and his audience throughout the term.

By getting rid of readers and rhetorics, Ms. Johnson frees students to deal with their writing alone. They write descriptive themes about very simple objects and they try to draw the objectives on the blackboard from others' descriptions, thus learning the weaknesses of most descriptions in evoking the real thing. Grammar is discussed as a system with conventions carrying different levels of importance, and the worth of the different conventions as well as their history is discussed. One typed essay and one half-hour, in-class essay are required a week, as well as frequent paraphrasing. Her classes meet $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours a week, in three one-hour days and one hour-and-a-half session.

Ms. Johnson asserts that developmental students need more meetings per week and more intensive detail work than their regular class counterparts, but should use the

same college level materials and be graded on the same standards as regular freshmen. Their needs as she sees them are the need to learn to gather evidence and observe accurately and to increase their limited vocabulary and knowledge of the various types of sentence patterns. It seems to me that hers is a good, solid program for students whose scores indicate that they need extra help. Using internalized language rules makes English, for once, a positive experience rather than a dreaded class, since the emphasis is on what a student already knows about language rather than on what rules he has broken.¹⁶

Areas of English where most people have internalized the system without really being able to explain what they do are yes/no questions, such as "It's raining outside, isn't it?" or "She's not bright, is she?" where the native speaker takes the beginning element of the sentence and reverses it for the ending element. Thus the positive "It's raining" becomes the negative "isn't it?" and the negative "She's not bright" becomes the positive "is she." Another element of English that might be used to show students how much they know about a complicated system of language is word order. Just as students can identify the parts of speech (or at least the functions of the

¹⁶"Remedial English: The Anglocentric Albatross?" College English, 33 (March, 1972), 670-85.

words) in something containing nonsense words like Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," they can sense which of the following sentences are unacceptable because the words are in the wrong or at least poor order: (1) He picked most of the books up. (2) He picked up most of the books. (3) He picked up the books which were on the floor. (4) He picked the books which were on the floor up. Most developmental students can tell that sentence 4 has parts of the verb too far apart to be a really coherent expression, just as they can tell that there is a difference in meaning between sentences 1 and 2 even though only the word order, not the words themselves, is changed.

Karen Black also uses students' internalized knowledge about the way language operates by having students form rules for nonsense passages such as Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky." The same positive atmosphere prevails, since the emphasis is on known material rather than errors and students are made to realize that they know more about English than they had always thought.¹⁷

A third experiment in using a linguistic approach to teaching composition is the one used by Betty Cain of

¹⁷"The Application of Linguistic Principles to the Teaching of Freshman English," in Teaching Freshman Composition, ed. by Gary Tate and Edward P. J. Corbett (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 108-112.

Kennedy-King College in Chicago. By giving three groups of subjects nonsense phrases for which they had to create a sentence, she found that "human beings have a discourse competence that combines and orders movable units of meaning." She found that whether the group consisted of English instructors or second semester freshmen or developmental freshmen, all answered the nonsense passages in roughly the same way, by rearranging and repeating the A statement to get the B statement.

She concluded that a lack of innate language ability is not the problem with developmental students, for while remedial students may use different patterns, their sentences are not less understandable or necessarily less good than those produced by supposedly more verbally oriented students and instructors.¹⁸

Another composition teacher who based a course on language skills that 18-year-olds already have is Wilson Snipes of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He calls his approach oral composing and begins with oral expression such as composing a letter to a friend, an anecdote, etc. After thinking it out loud, the student writes the assignment. Recording equipment is used to talk and retalk the idea before it is written and rewritten.

¹⁸"Discourse Competence in Nonsense Paralogues," College Composition and Communication, 24 (May, 1973), 171-81.

Snipes' method positively emphasizes self-esteem, peer audience, and personal experience, in addition to the workout it gives students in language use.¹⁹

The advantages of the linguistic method in teaching composition are that it emphasizes positive rather than negative knowledge and that content and text and product can all be interrelated more than the usual rhetorical approach allows. Developmental students especially seem to improve reading and writing skills faster with this kind of positive approach.

Semantics

A new textbook in semantics deals with words and how they use us, and as such is a variation on the linguistics method for teaching composition. Robert Potter's Making Sense: Exploring Semantics and Critical Thinking is very readable (not every other word with a subscript, for example) and covers media, advertising, argument, propaganda, nonverbal communication, case histories, and analogies.

The use of semantics as a teaching subject, like that of linguistics and sentence combining, could not comprise the whole course in composition, but especially

¹⁹"Oral Composing as an Approach to Writing," College Composition and Communication, 24 (May, 1973), 200-05.

for developmental students, using the language itself as content for the course and subject matter for the writing is a positive, realistic way to teach about communication.

One extra advantage of Potter's text is that he differentiates in the exercises by level of student, so that an instructor can tell from the manual which ones might be too much for a developmental class, or too simple for a bright class, etc. Semantics shows students that each person has a different verbal context for words and may not receive a message with the same meaning with which it was sent. This in itself might be reason enough for using such a text, but semantics teaches other useful concepts as well, such as:

1. Words have no meaning and convey no meaning in themselves, but are merely symbols for commonly accepted concepts.
2. High-level abstractions, those hair-trigger words like "communism," are best avoided because they have such strong emotional meaning.
3. Low-level abstractions, usually nouns which name things in groups by ignoring small differences, cause problems by not being specific enough.
4. It is impossible to know all about a thing.
5. Most either-or classifications do not present a true picture of the options available.²⁰

²⁰(New York: Globe Book Company, Inc., 1974), 17.

Because language is such a useful subject matter for students who need to go out into the real world and communicate, it ought to be used as subject matter for classes for low-level students whenever possible.

Some new ways of looking at traditional English courses are finally being offered, especially for developmental students. While it may be more fun for the instructor to think of new ways of approaching modern literature for bright students, devising ways of teaching the building blocks of language to students who have missed the point for years can also be very rewarding. One need is for more materials which teach the fundamentals of grammar, mechanics, spelling, and diction in a useful way for adults, for most developmental students are beyond remedial texts in knowledge about the world, even if they do not know all the rules of grammar. There are many new ways of teaching the composing process, as we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

WEAKNESSES IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS

Assuming that grammar, spelling, and mechanics errors are being individually prescribed for and eradicated in a writing lab, developmental students still need help with the composing process. In addition to learning more about words and sentences, developmental students need practice choosing a theme topic, beginning a theme, organizing ideas, and developing those ideas in an interesting and convincing way.

There seem to be two main types of research on the composing process. One group of writers espouses "free writing," in which students write a lot on nearly any topic to loosen their writing muscles; the other group of writers looks for ways of controlling writing: using peer evaluation, overhead projectors and cassette recorders, stimulating topics, and emphasis on detail and description. Both groups have something to offer the teacher of developmental students, so I will examine each approach in some detail.

If problem areas in grammar and mechanics can be separated and worked on through individualized programs,

instructors can use a more positive approach than is usual for these low students in their writing classes. Rather than viewing writing assignments as one more chance to make a lot of errors, students can come to see writing as another source of communication. Virginia Allen of Temple University sees the problem of developmental students as follows: "What is needed throughout the grades is a way of attending to the conventions of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical usage without obscuring the main point; namely, that English offers a rich variety of resources for expression and that anyone can learn to use them."¹

Freeing Writing as a Solution

Journals

An early proponent of the write-a-lot school was Patrick E. Kilburn. He had his students write 15 minutes a day in a journal which he read but never marked. The first day of class he had the class write for 15 minutes so he could tell how much each one could write in that

¹"Some Strategies for Teaching Standard English as a Second Dialect," in Teaching English as a Second Language and as a Second Dialect, ed. Robert P. Fox (Urbana, Ill. NCTE, 1973), p. 101.

length of time.² This latter aspect of his method would be a good one for free writing classes to use, since mere word or page limits do not apply equally to each student's abilities.

James Klein of Farleigh-Dickinson University calls his free writing method "self-composition" and requires students to write in a notebook for three hours a week. He feels that students relax with the constant writing since they can write anything and get help with it. Because so much emphasis is on the journal in his classes, he does correct it, asking students to rewrite sentences and compose sentences describing each error. Rather than stressing the opening up that journals are supposed to elicit from students, Klein feels that the improvement in his students is primarily due to teaching writing as a manual skill.³ One other reason for this improvement is probably that his classes are limited to 12 students each.

At the opposite extreme is the journal method used as one of 18 options offered freshmen at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The journal class required daily free writing in a journal and a long paper

²"Every Man His Own Pedagogue: A Project in the Teaching of Freshman Composition," in Teaching Freshman Composition, ed. Gary Tate and Edward P. J. Corbett, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 238-44.

³"Self-Composition," College English, 35 (February, 1974), 584-88.

at the end of the term. In this case the journals were not the personal kind seen only by the instructor, since the daily assignments were dittoed for the entire class to discuss. The public exposure also removed the ungraded aspect of some journal experiments, since the object of this class discussion was evaluation.

One strong point of the SUNY experiment, according to Taylor Stoehr, was the stress put on the relationship of a writer to his audience through class discussions. The big drawback, though, was that the students seemed to lack enough sense of responsibility to design their own class when given the opportunity to do so. Rather than seeing the journal as a way of expressing themselves, students saw it as a lazy way of teaching. After the first six weeks, the class fell apart and assignments, when turned in, seemed to be based on word count alone.⁴

Journals can be used with developmental students, but care must be taken to introduce the method as a serious means of learning about writing by being able to write without constant criticism. If students feel that length is the object, they will tend to write

⁴Taylor Stoehr, et al. "Writing About Experience: A Report of Freshman English," College English, 32 (October, 1970), 9-44.

diaries instead of journals illustrating their personal growth as writers. As with most developmental assignments, ad finiteness is one key to success. Properly used, a journal might be a very useful way of getting low students to open up and express themselves. Once this task is accomplished, an instructor can then move on to one of the ways for controlling writing I will discuss later.

Free Writing as a Class Opener

One way of using free writing is as a short beginning to each class, instead of the usual out-of-class journal. At Staten Island Community College John McBride gives a class which must write for ten minutes at the beginning of each class period some inspiration by writing a group of random words on the board; all then must be worked into the writing for that day. He also uses music or collages for student inspiration at this part of the period.⁵

Jean Pumphrey of the College of San Mateo, California uses five or ten minutes of free writing every class period (to get students over the "block" time when they cannot think of what to write or how to say it) so

⁵Staten Island Community College Faculty, "Staten Island Community College," College English, 35 (May, 1974), 945-97.

that students can get their writing muscles loosened up. She gives starting and stopping times and demands that students keep writing even if they copy words over until they think of something to say.⁶

It seems to me that the use of free writing in limited amounts might be advantageous to developmental students, since it forces them to go on even if they think they have nothing to say.

Free Writing as a First Draft

A really successful use of free writing is Jean Pumphrey's course, which uses writing as text and subject matter and motivation all at once. Her first assigned theme, for example, explores problems that come up while writing and why it is so difficult to write. She stresses that it is easier to write three drafts and change them than to write one painstaking piece of finished work. The use of free writing to create first drafts and to instill in students the sense that they have ideas worth writing about is very profitable with low students, who need encouragement rather than error counting. After this first version establishes the subject matter, a

⁶"Teaching English Composition as a Creative Art," College English, 34 (February, 1973), 666-73.

second version can establish the best order in which to present the chosen information, and a third version can emphasize the way to say this information to attain the most convincing and interesting effect.

Writing about writing is good for developmental students both because it gets rid of their feelings of frustration about writing and provides a great deal of practice. Since Pumphrey's method of revisions controls the freer writing that the early versions of the theme consist of, I will discuss it in the later part of the chapter dealing with controlling writing.

Another instructor who uses the first draft of a paper to get a rapid flow of ideas which can be revised later for proper grammar, punctuation, spelling and mechanics is Betty Shiflett. This positive emphasis on what the student can do rather than what he cannot do carries over into other aspects of the Story Workshop at Columbia College, Chicago, where she teaches. Each student in a class of 18 begins writing at his or her own level when he or she enters the class. Teaching is individualized so that the whole class need not be exposed to material required by only the slowest. A combination of telling, reading, and writing enables students to get their voices and their perceptions down on paper. Reading their own work aloud in conferences gives students a chance to see where communication breaks down; reading

aloud in class stresses listening as students are taught to read so others can visualize the scene at the same time.

This Columbia College experiment is another which stresses the importance of writing for a specific audience. Because words mean different things to different people, teaching this semantic principle is important in classes dealing with communication. Writing descriptive papers, students discover readily that each member of the class will describe the same place in a different way, thus illustrating the importance of point of view.⁷

The advantage of the free writing approach for low students is that it enables them to have a positive experience with writing, since what they say is more important than how they say it. If this positive impact encourages them to say more than they might have, it is possible that the volume of writing might reduce errors by giving more practice in communication, but this is so far only a claim. Obvious disadvantages of free writing and journals include the unstructured quality of such exercises, since low students are known to do their best work when they know exactly what is expected of them, and the danger that free writing will be used by an experienced

⁷"Story Workshop as a Method of Teaching Writing," College English, 35 (November, 1973), 141-60.

instructor as an end in itself. Especially with low students, classes must also include some attention to detail. Mere expression is a step forward for some of the lowest students, but needs to be refined into better communication if the class can truly be called one in communication.

Evocative Topics as a Solution

Feeling that total choice of topic offers so much range that it is self-defeating for low students, some instructors come up with topics based on experiences that students can write about easily. Rosentene Purnell of the Fisk University in Nashville, for example, begins with topics of self-evaluation: a student's roles, his self-image, others' images of him, his most important needs, etc. The final question in this series, "Does society satisfy your needs?" leads naturally into some serious thinking and also into a series of field trips and community involvement in the process of communication.⁸

Topics Based on Field Trips

After a class topic is chosen, resource materials are gathered and much reading and discussion goes on before

⁸"Islands and Exiles: The College, the Students, and the Community in Writing Programs," College Composition and Communication, 24 (May, 1973), 144-49.

the field trips. Purnell has had success with the topics of drug abuse, abortion, hospitalization and medical care for the poor, and prison conditions. This kind of current event topic gives students a chance to do research on both sides of a cause and see it in both a theoretical and realistic light. They thus learn more about logic and argumentation than they might be able to get out of a textbook. Field trips like these would eliminate the student excuse that they have nothing to write about, in addition to offering some useful practice in logical thought processes.

Topics Based on Modern Media

One type of topic which seemed to grow out of the art movements of the 1960's might be called the media model for writing. Generally the type calls for visual or aural stimulation of students to give them writing topics. One such stimulation is the happening or unstructured event.

Michael Paull and Jack Kligerman of Herbert H. Lehman College of the City University of New York used a happening to inspire student writers. To structure the happening, they passed out slips of paper giving each member of the class an activity, such as "Stare at the person at the front of the room," "read aloud from the dictionary," etc. After the happening took place, students were

asked to write about it. The responses predictably went from very generalized at first to very specific as they were encouraged to describe what really happened rather than to give a general impression of it.

The same two instructors also combined the current interest in meditation with an exercise in descriptive writing in several assignments in and out of class. A common object, such as a squash, might be displayed to evoke writing using detail and observation. A certain street near the campus might be used as a focal point for further descriptive writing practice. The emphasis in these meditations was on sharp observation and the use of specific detail to describe things, emotions, people, and places.⁹

A similar use of current materials is Harvey Weiner's media composition, which used multi-media stimulation to get students to write. Using collages, photo essays, tapes, and slides, his students write themes of identity (beginning with a collage and moving on to writing), description, comparison/contrast, and argumentation (invent a product and produce three ads for it). He feels that they write more fluently later

⁹"Invention, Composition, and the Urban College," College English, 33 (March, 1972), 651-59.

in the quarter because of this beginning multi-media preparation in the use of details and the power of observation.¹⁰

Ronald Dow's experiment with a media-stimulated class in composition at Boston University included films, speakers, photographs, and other visual stimuli. His students wrote in notebooks, but had no specific assignments, and only the things they chose were read by the instructor. Students helped decide their own grades, supported by examples from their writing.¹¹ While Dow contends that his 70 experimental students learned just as much as a more conventionally structured group of 26, it seems possible that what really happened is that they learned just as little as the control group. A completely unstructured classroom might work for teaching writing to bright, responsible students, but low students would keep wondering what was expected of them and then be puzzled if they fulfilled the vague requirements and did not get an "A."

Using current and stimulating material is definitely one way to give students topics for writing. A strong warning is in order, however, for profitable

¹⁰"Media Compositions: Preludes to Writing," College English, 35 (February, 1974), 566-74.

¹¹"The Student-Writer's Laboratory: An Approach to Composition," Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University School of Education, 1973.

writing experiences are hard work, for instructor and for student. Anyone who tries to teach writing through unplanned class discussion on current events is probably having a rap session rather than teaching writing.

Controlling Writing as a Solution

Perhaps because the free writing and stimulating topic solutions too often lead to vague classes, in which the results are as unpredictable as the class is bewildered, some current researchers are looking into the possibilities of controlling student writing rather than freeing it. In some cases the control comes from group evaluation and peer pressure to communicate better; in some it comes from carefully structured assignments; and in some it comes from judicious use of recording and projection equipment.

Small Groups, Peer Evaluation

Joan Putz designed a class of NYU which wrote eight papers in a semester, all dittoed for peer evaluation in both large and small groups. Using five raters and three essays (two 20-minute ones and one 40-minute essay) for each pretest and posttest, she decided that neither her peer evaluated experimental group nor her control group, taught composition more conventionally, improved in their writing skills.

At least this particular experiment shows that omitting grammar and mechanics in composition classes does not hurt at the community college level, nor does the old way of teaching seem to help.¹²

A similar experiment by Robert Ornstein, with high school students in Cleveland, shows that one reason for inconclusive results may be that students know the correct ways of using grammatical and mechanical rules, but do not always bother to do so. Ornstein used small groups and peer evaluation to teach creative writing, and individual tutoring to clear up problem areas in individual writing. His results are more conclusive than those of Putz, since he at least found that inner-city schools need the very best teachers to get results.¹³

Kenneth Bruffee, Director of the Freshman Writing Program at Brooklyn College, calls his use of groups and peer evaluation "collaborative learning" and has used it in composition classes for freshmen as well as advanced literature classes. While he found that some members of each small group needed more help than others, his method of giving reading assignments and written questions to each group seemed to work efficiently. Students who could

¹²"When the Teacher Stops Teaching—An Experiment with Freshman English," College English, 32 (October, 1970), 50-57.

¹³"Teaching the Disadvantaged: A Report on the East Tech Project," College English, 32 (April, 1971), 760-71.

do the assignment were grouped together for discussion of their answers and their writing; those who had difficulty were involved in more discussion of the assigned reading and tried to do the writing in class. Writing assignments included evaluations of other students' papers, so that the oral evaluation needed to be tied to specifics rather than vague generalities so that the student judges could write the evaluation later.¹⁴ Bruffee seems to have worked out the best small group/peer evaluation plan for low students, as it is structured enough so they would realize they had to produce rather than sit and talk.

Another workable peer evaluation method is that of Peter Elbow of Evergreen State College. Generally he eliminates the instructor in favor of group evaluation and limits reactions of the peer group to how the writing made them feel rather than specific suggestions for corrections and improvements. His idea is to make the writer aware of his audience and his ability to communicate. This approach would help students relax much like free writing, since they can worry about saying something without losing their train of thought by concentrating on details of technical correctness.¹⁵

¹⁴"Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models," College English 34 (February, 1973), 634-43.

¹⁵Writing Without Teachers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

Workroom, Peer Tutors

Miami-Dade Community College, South Campus, offers a student tutorial program in its Reading and Writing workroom. The workroom is a voluntary extra program (although credit can be earned for attendance) and since enrollment has increased from 200 to nearly 800 in four years, it can be inferred that the workroom is filling a student need for help. While the staff claims that a combination of extensive publicity and effective diagnosis of deficiencies brought students to the laboratory, it appears that the program at the workroom kept them there until they improved.

Basically the workroom is administered by a teacher's aide, who takes care of registration, scheduling, distribution of materials, and keeping records. Student tutors, who receive either pay or course credit (in either advanced composition or one of two social science courses), hold appointments with students needing help. The presence of so many staff members makes it possible to keep the laboratory open from early morning to late evening four days a week and for part of the day on Friday and Saturday. According to George Welch, "the lab set out to convince the student that there is such a thing as an academic community of students and that the student himself makes learning happen, rather than that learning is

something given to him like a pill or a shove."¹⁶ This conviction is one reason Miami-Dade Community College designed the Workroom rather than a remedial class or a laboratory using only programmed materials: they wanted to have a community of learners with tutors and students part of one large peer group. It is the staff's feeling that the peer identification between student and tutor was one important reason for student successes in the Workroom such as an average increase in reading comprehension between one-and-a-half and two grade levels, 20 percent improvement in both spelling and vocabulary, one grade point improvement in grade from beginning to end of the term, and improved classroom attitude.

The advantages of small groups and peer evaluation are obvious—students can get immediate feedback from others who have similar writing problems and can be assured of an audience for what they have to say. As a method of helping poor writers get going it is probably very good. It also "involves the student in the evaluative process, which ceases to be a mystery looked on with hostility. Having to find the mistakes of others makes the student more conscious of his own errors, and it teaches

¹⁶"Organizing a Reading and Writing Lab in Which Students Teach," College Composition and Communication, 35 (December, 1974), 894-99.

him the notion of an audience."¹⁷ One further advantage for community college teachers who are usually teaching five sections of composition is that peer evaluation would relieve some of the work load. The biggest problem I can see with using peer evaluation as one solution for problems in the composing process is that instructor help must always be available also—the peer group cannot be allowed to give grades or make final evaluations of writing competence. Students can help find each other's errors, however, even if they can't always identify their own. As long as it is used along with other methods or for tutorial help peer evaluation seems a helpful method to try.

Very Structured Assignments

Use of detail for sentence paragraph development is taught by Harvey Weiner of LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York in 300-word narrative paragraphs because he feels that students can more easily deal with structural elements in the shorter form and could best write about their own experiences this way. The checklist given the student writers is worth repeating because it can be used with other forms such as comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and classification also (with some

¹⁷Francine Hardaway, "What Students Can Do to Take the Burden Off You," College English, 36 (January, 1975), 577-80.

modifications, but with similar emphasis on detail). A strong point of this checklist for use with low students is that it is a positive checklist—not "don't" but "do."

1. Write a topic sentence to include an exact statement of your topic and some opinion you have about the topic.
2. Try to state the time and place of the event in the first few lines of your paragraph.
3. Try to use several instances of sensory language in expanded pictures:
 - a. mention at least three colors
 - b. use at least three words that name sounds
 - c. use a word that appeals to the sense of smell
 - d. use a word that indicates a sensation of touch.
4. Mention people and places by name.
5. Use lively verbs that indicate action. Show people in the midst of activity when you mention their names.
6. Start at least three sentences with words on the list of subordinators you examined last week.
7. Start one or two sentences with a word that ends in -ing.
8. Start one or two sentences with a word that ends in -ly.¹⁸

This kind of approach might be too prescriptive for some teachers, but the idea of positiveness could be used by anyone, and the detail of such a list could be very helpful

¹⁸"The Single Narrative Paragraph and College Remediation," College English, 33 (March, 1972), 660-69.

to a new graduate assistant. The very vagueness with which writing is often taught may well be one of the reasons so few people ever learn to write well in composition classes.

The very best book I have found for teaching the composing process also takes a structured approach. William Kerrigan's Writing to the Point is written conversationally rather than in educationese, and low students seem really to like to use it as a text. Kerrigan's six steps may reduce composition to almost mathematical simplicity, but while great creative writing is not the result of using his method, clear and interesting exposition is.

The six basic steps are:

- Step 1: Write a short, simple declarative sentence that makes one statement. (This is sentence x)
- Step 2: Write three sentences about the sentence in Step 1—clearly and directly about the whole of that sentence, not just something in it. (Sentences 1, 2, & 3)
- Step 3: Write four or five sentences about each of the three sentences in Step 2.
- Step 4: Make the material in the four or five sentences in Step 3 as concrete and specific as possible. Go into detail. Use examples. Your goal is to say a lot about a little, not a little about a lot.
- Step 5: Below the broken line, in the first sentence of the second paragraph and every paragraph following, insert a clear reference to the idea of the preceding paragraph.

Step 6: Make sure every sentence in your theme is connected with, and makes a clear reference to, the preceding sentence.

Each theme written according to Kerrigan's method has a built-in outline at the top of the first page for the student to refer to: it consists of sentence x, with sentences 1, 2, and 3 indented and following, the whole followed by a broken line. While transition words and phrases are added to these core sentences as the writing proceeds, these sentences remain as the basic framework for the theme.¹⁹

I have used Kerrigan's book successfully with developmental students in a four-year school, and know of at least one community college in Arizona where the book is highly praised. Not a book for creative writers or for very skilled writers, it remains an excellent tool for use with people with problems organizing and developing their writing.

Group Themes for Control of Writing

A third structured method of approaching composition for low students is John McNamara's group theme idea. He spends the first five weeks of the term at the University of Houston having the entire class write impromptu themes on the board with the instructor as scribe. The

¹⁹(New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1974).

class suggests; the instructor indicates which of possible stylistic choices would be better. Writing as a group forces the students to consider their audience and also lets them observe how other people approach the assignment. A further advantage of the method would be the emphasis on choice: no one stylistic option would be automatically correct. Like sentence combining, board work could show different ways of expressing the same idea and could also show advantages of each way in differing situations, depending on the effect wanted.

McNamara's method would teach detail and transitions so that when the class began to write individual themes after five weeks (first in small groups collaborating, finally on their own entirely) they can cope with broad topics without getting too general in their comments. He has them practice in the large group on such topics as teenage marriage and a definition of maturity, both topics students can approach out of personal experience and observation.²⁰

I am not sure I could spend five weeks writing group themes on the board, but the idea of class participation is a good one for teaching stylistic choices at

²⁰"Teaching the Process of Writing," College English, 34 (February, 1973), 661-65.

least. Poor writers might also benefit from the moral support the class participation would give. Like peer evaluation, it might help them loosen up and think about writing as a possible and successful activity.

Copying Models for Control of Writing

The most structured method of teaching the composing process is paraphrasing or copying model paragraphs. Phyllis Brooks uses paraphrasing in the remedial English program at the University of California at Berkeley with apparent success. The assignment is to paraphrase a paragraph in the exact style of the original on another topic. She claims that the method is useful for teaching parallelism and balanced style and that students really learn to develop variety in their writing.²¹

Again, I think the method is useful to a limited extent. Certainly no one would want to have a class spend an entire term imitating other writers. On the other hand, some of this paraphrasing of models might indeed improve the style of poor writers. Historically both Robert Lewis Stevenson and Samuel Johnson espouse the use of models for teaching writing. The method is successful with foreign students, but there the idiom needs to be learned for the

²¹"Mimesis: Grammar and the Echoing Voice," College English, 35 (November, 1973), 161-68.

new language. Much would depend on the models chosen, or the criticism of the Christenson method, that his authors were not everyone's "best" choice, could be made.

Revision as a Way of Controlling Writing

Too often, revision of themes seems to be a perfunctory process for students. They receive papers back and look at the grade, make a few spelling and punctuation corrections already marked by the instructor, and file the paper or throw it away if it does not need to be seen again by the instructor. In the way it is used by Jean Pumphrey at San Mateo, revision becomes a real part of the composing process instead. After writing a first draft using free writing, as discussed earlier, the second and third versions of the theme involve constant revision. She feels that no one can revise until he actually practices doing it; the process is not one that can be taught strictly by telling about it. Thus from the very beginning she has students revise and revise each sentence, for clearer communication, more interesting statement of the idea, and more convincing detail.²²

²²"Teaching English Composition as a Creative Art," College English, 34 (February, 1973), 666-73.

Mechanical Aids to Control

Several experiments have been tried with the use of tapes or cassettes or dictabelts to transmit theme comments from instructor to student. Basically the system works by having the instructor tape his comments and return the tape and the theme to the student, who then goes to an audio-visual lab and listens to the comments. Supposed to combine the best features of written comments and individual conferences, recorded comment can point out and explain in more detail than is usually available the problems of writing. According to Enno Klammer of Eastern Oregon College at LaGrande, an early user of the method, recording theme comments enables an instructor to say more and say it clearly. He used the method for three years with 450 students before writing it up, and he feels the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.²³ The disadvantages, as found by Klammer and Tallahassee Community College in Florida, are the mechanical phobia of many teachers and the cumbersome equipment and tapes that have to be carried around. Boxes of 25 cassettes are more complicated to take home in addition to a set of papers, than a set of papers, certainly. Klammer also found that it takes about

²³"Cassettes in the Classroom," College English, 35 (November, 1973), 179-89.

half again as long to grade each theme by this method, although the thoroughness of grading might override this possible disadvantage. Tallahassee Community College also found that the IBM dictating equipment they used, while less cumbersome than cassettes, had more mechanical problems and called for more repairs. Cassettes seem preferable in the experiments I have seen, since students seem to have players available and are used to the medium. The cassette system has another advantage over the IBM, since comments can be retained on the former. Another point of view on the use of cassettes is that of Russell Hunt, who generally agrees with Klammer, but foresees students wanting to record their papers rather than write them, since by using cassettes the instructor seems to be saying: "Written language is cumbersome, difficult, mechanically time-consuming and hopelessly limited. Given a choice between writing and dictating, I, a teacher of writing, choose to employ the resources of the spoken word as opposed to the written one."²⁴

Another mechanical approach to control in the composing process is Steven Gale's use of the overhead projector to mark sample themes at the University of Puerto Rico. Used early in the term, this approach enables an

²⁴"Technological Gift-Horse: Some Reflections on the Teeth of Cassette-Marking," College English, 36 (January, 1975), 585.

instructor to explain his markings and demonstrate the means of correction all at once. He chooses a "D" to "C" paper as it has plenty to work with but has some good points that can be mentioned also. Dividing the class into groups of four to six students, Gale goes over the paper line by line, writing in the class' suggested improvements. He allows a full class period for each group demonstration, so that each student can have enough time to ask questions and make suggestions. The only problem is making transparencies of the themes, but most schools have audio-visual materials where this can be done by the students.²⁵

Modern technology has some equipment that can be used successfully in composition classes. As long as the aim of teaching students how to write better is not lost in a big inventory of the latest untested machines, there is nothing wrong with using new ideas such as these in the classroom.

The composing process is at least as important as the grammatical and mechanical details of writing. Developmental students are not lacking in ideas, but they do need help in learning to express themselves clearly and interestingly. While individual conferences and drill

²⁵"The Use of an Overhead Projector in Composition Classes as an Aid to Meaningful Revision Assignments," Pedagogia, 19 (December-January, 1971), 155-59.

assignments are probably the best way of attacking the detail problem, there are many classroom methods that can help students get better at the composing process.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND PLANNING

In addition to students and materials, a primary concern of any developmental program must be the working out of administrative problems such as staff training, credit, grading, scheduling, and physical plant. So few people are trained in developmental teaching of college students that those who are will frequently be called on to organize the whole developmental program as well as teach it, so these administrative concerns are not as peripheral as they might seem at first.

These problems will be discussed in descending order of importance: staff is by far the most important, then the administrative details that affect how the students take the class (credit, grades), and physical plant is last because it does not matter much at all in comparison to other concerns.

Staff Training

I received my M.A. the year after my B.A. without having been a graduate assistant, so I had no teaching

experience at all when I entered my first classroom. I mistakenly believed that most college teachers of freshman composition had some sort of training and that I had missed out, though most new teachers have had very little preparation. In my research I have discovered that painfully few schools train their graduate assistants at all; these assistants are expected to show up a day or so before classes and study the course syllabus while unpacking and moving in and getting the utilities turned on and registering for their own classes.

This present system in most schools hardly seems an adequate way of teaching what may be the only writing course most students will ever have. If it is true that students need to be taught how to write, we ought to give the course and its teachers some attention so that it can be worthwhile to the students and the graduate assistants.

While there is much improvement possible at the freshman English level generally as far as staff training goes, such training is absolutely crucial for teachers of developmental students. One very strong point of the community college system in Florida is the approach they take in this matter. I was told that rather than have the newest, least experienced teachers take the low sections, as happens in some four-year schools, developmental English

is taught by the best teachers, since it is the most difficult job.¹

One reason for the lack of training for teaching college English appears to be the traditional rivalry between English departments and colleges of education for status. As Francis Christensen pointed out, a course in advanced composition for teachers is rarely taught "because education is below the English department."² I have, however, found five schools which have well-planned programs for teaching their graduate assistants to do a good job in the classroom, and I feel that their programs are worth investigating in some detail.

While most of the programs I will describe deal primarily with training freshman composition teachers, the training programs involved are applicable to training developmental composition teachers as well. I will point out in detail in the section of the chapter describing the teacher training program at Florida State University how training for teaching regular and developmental classes

¹Ann Ritch, head of Communications Department, Santa Fe Community College, private interview, April, 1971, and Jane Mooney, Tallahassee Community College English Department, private interview, July, 1974.

²"The Course in Advanced Composition for Teachers," College Composition and Communication, 24 (May, 1973), 163-70.

can overlap to a considerable degree and also what extra topics should be covered in a class for teachers of developmental students.

The University of Iowa

Five years ago Richard Braddock described in College English the training program at the University of Iowa, a pioneer school in writing programs of all kinds. Since 1945, their freshman English course, which is called Communications, has included writing, speaking, and reading skills. Because 55 new graduate assistants began teaching the course every year, in September, 1968, they began a one-semester course offered by the English and Speech Departments called Teaching Freshman Rhetoric, which was required of all new teachers. Groups of eight, consisting of two experienced teachers and six new ones, met for one hour of lecture and one of discussion each week.

In 1969, the groups were expanded to 12 and consisted of one experienced faculty member, one experienced graduate assistant, and ten new graduate students. The group still met two hours a week, examined and discussed graded papers, had each teacher evaluated by his or her class, and evaluated each member of the group themselves on each one's performance. Teaching credit was given for leading the groups, and graduate assistants received credits for attending. While the lectures on methods

proved helpful, Braddock did point out that the discussions need to be well planned to remain practical and helpful to the teaching assistants. When the sessions became theoretical the students felt that their time was better spent grading papers and studying for their own classes.³ The program's advantages were the production of trained teaching assistants and a more uniform freshman English course than is usually possible with the large staff involved.

The University of Texas

According to Maxine C. Hairston, a "new teacher" at the University of Texas at Austin is one who has never taught at the University of Texas before, regardless of other experience. She notes in her discussion of the training program for new teachers there that the requirement that all new teachers enroll in the year-long program is resented by some of these experienced teachers to the point where it becomes the chief problem of the program. The school defends its policy by pointing out that its freshman writing program is different enough from that of other schools to require some orientation to it

³"Reversing the Peter Principle to Help Inexperienced Graduate Assistants Teach Freshman Rhetoric," College English, 32 (October, 1970), 45-49.

and that teachers can be released from the program during the latter part of the second semester if their counselor feels that they are competent enough.

The University of Texas training program is not as inexpensive as the traditional means of either assigning graduate students to senior faculty members in an apprenticeship system or of requiring all graduate assistants to take a course in the teaching of college English, but the administrative cost of about \$500 per teacher trained is certainly worth it in terms of the confidence and reassurance given the teaching assistants and the uniform freshman course and relative lack of grading discrepancies thus given the English Department.

Training groups consist of one senior teaching assistant and five or six new ones. The senior assistants are all volunteers who have been teaching at the University of Texas in the English program for two years at least and who are known to be effective teachers. Each teaches a section of freshman composition and receives teaching credit for one other section for counseling a group of new assistants. The senior assistants were chosen over higher ranking faculty for several reasons: tenured faculty are often out of touch with the freshman program and are busy with their own teaching and research; the newer faculty are usually unfamiliar with the writing program at the University of Texas; while senior assistants are closer

in age and interests to new assistants and can thus form a better helping relationship.

A month before classes begin, texts and a syllabus are mailed to each new assistant. In two days of orientation prior to the beginning of classes, they meet the faculty, discuss the goals of the freshman English program, and attend seminars on grading, theme assignments, classroom procedures and other beginning teacher concerns

During the first semester each group meets weekly. The leader presents the next week's syllabus for discussion, mentions several approaches that might be taken to present the material, and reviews any apparent problem areas. The group suggests possible ways of presenting the material in effective and interesting ways, and experienced members of the group outline methods that have worked for them before. The wide range of experience in the group, since every new English Department assistant at the University of Texas has to take the class, seems to help the group interaction. This first semester, each assistant is required to hand in the theme topic his class will be given the next week so that the counselor can make sure it is not so difficult that freshmen will not be able to handle it in the time allowed, or so general that sloppy writing will result, or too susceptible to plagiarism.

Early in the first semester the counselor looks at a set of papers each member of the group has graded before

they are returned to the freshmen to check if the comments made are consistent and conscientious and if the grading standards adhered to are roughly like those of the department. Also this semester the leader of the group visits two of each assistant's classes (one of which is videotaped) and is available several hours a week for immediate help to the new people.

The second semester the group meets less often and hands in less of their planning work, but the senior assistant is still there to provide help, as is the head counselor of the entire group.

Hairston figures her costs at about \$500 per teaching assistant trained because the approximately 35 new people a year are trained by six senior assistants or counselors each receiving half of his \$4,000 salary from the training program and one head counselor receiving half of a \$10,000 salary from the program.⁴ Spending \$17,000 to train 35 teachers to teach what may be the only writing course many students will take is a small investment.

Florida State University

Marion Bashinski's excellent writing program at Florida State University is staffed in part by graduate

⁴"Preparing the Composition Teacher," College Composition and Communication, 25 (February, 1974), 52-55.

assistants trained for at least one summer session prior to beginning teaching. In this summer course, called English 595, graduate students write papers such as they will be assigning to their freshman students in the fall, observe classes taught by experienced teachers, mark practice sets of papers, prepare units for teaching various rhetorical skills, and spend four days practice teaching.

During their teaching terms, graduate assistants are advised by experienced faculty members (each of whom is assigned a group of ten to 12 assistants) who make three classroom visits, check two sets of graded papers and evaluate each student at the end of the term ⁵

The differences between English 595, Teaching College Composition, and English 594, Teaching Developmental Reading and Writing, are matters of content rather than format. Both courses require considerable reading of books and journals on writing and teaching writing, in-class presentations, and a final paper. The composition teaching course also requires three papers written on topics that will be assigned to freshmen, so that a prospective teacher can anticipate student problems by having encountered them himself. The composition teaching course also

⁵Head of Florida State University writing laboratory, private interview, July, 1974

requires four observations by experienced teachers who evaluate the student teacher and four observations by the student teachers of classes conducted by experienced teachers. Instead of these eight classes, the students in the developmental teaching course are required to work in the reading and writing laboratory for ten class periods by the program director. Thus the basic difference between the two training classes is that students learning to teach composition learn to teach groups; students learning to teach developmental reading and writing learn to teach individuals. Emphasis on individualization of teaching is a requirement of any program for training developmental teachers.

Although more emphasis seems to be on evaluation in the Florida State University program than the ones at Texas and Iowa, all three programs outlined so far appear thoroughly to ground beginning teachers in fundamentals of grading, planning classes, theme assignments, and evaluating writing with their students.

University of Illinois, Urbana

A class which could be adapted to use in other places is "The Theory and Practice of Written Composition," which is required for secondary education majors at the University of Illinois, Urbana. Since the class is also taken by some graduate students who are planning to teach

college level writing and because it meets many objectives of a training course for college teachers of English, Donald Nemanich's course is worth examining.

His three goals are to teach writing, theory of composition and rhetoric, and methods of teaching. He has his students write extensively, feeling that this at least makes them more sympathetic teachers of writing, if not better writers themselves. Each student writes 12 to 15 out-of-class papers in a semester. A variety of modes is expected, of which exposition, narration, argument, description, myth, satire, poetry, fiction, comparison and contrast, process, and classification papers are possibilities.

Five to ten in-class themes are also done and range from free writings (responses to films, pictures, music), to journals, to advertising. Nemanich says he tries to include some nonliterary assignments to get across the idea that "writing doesn't have to be either painful or boring."⁶

Reading assigned in the course includes a central text, either Teaching High School Composition or Teaching Freshman Composition (both edited by Gary Tate and Edward P. J. Corbett), readings on the history of rhetoric, and current journals such as College English, College Composition

⁶"Preparing the Composition Teacher," College Composition and Communication, 25 (February, 1974), 46-48.

and Communication, and Research in the Teaching of English on the recent developments in teaching composition.

Nemanich feels that students need to recognize that a variety of ways of teaching composition exist and that most research on composition so far is inconclusive. Some new approaches his classes study are the teaching of composition by linguistics, by rhetoric, by film, along with the traditional combinations of literature and grammar.

His third area of coverage is methods. For this part of the course, Nemanich gives students practice in planning a sequence of assignments in composition, in designing assignments and theme topics, in reading and responding to student papers. For the latter he uses some peer evaluation, finding that the more positive comments engendered this way help reinforce learning and improve writing performance and length of writing more than negative comments.

Nemanich has taught his course for four years, and appears to have a plan that trains competent high school teachers. The same type of three-pronged approach could easily be used in a college class for teaching college composition instructors. His attention to rhetoric might be out of place in a class devoted to teaching developmental composition teachers, but the emphasis on diverse methods and solid background in personal writing could certainly remain.

University of Cincinnati

An example of a good orientation session for new teachers is that given at the University of Cincinnati. The first day begins training with a group session "that aims to adjust the new teacher's attitudes toward the general job of teaching composition."⁷ New and old teachers evaluate popular misconceptions about the composition course offered to freshmen, among them that it is a literature course, that good writing follows good thinking (evidenced by lively discussions in class), and that literature ought to be taught as great books rather than as a process of writing which involves teachable skills. This opening session breaks up into groups of five or six new teachers to one experienced teacher and they discuss their feelings about what will be involved in teaching composition. The message that comes across is that the attitudes referred to above are wrong and that believing that the course will be a literature course, for example, could really hurt the course and the students who are vainly trying to improve their writing.

Another stressed idea in the University of Cincinnati training is that composition is a skills course and

⁷Joseph J. Comprone, "Preparing the Composition Teacher," College Composition and Communication, 25 (February, 1974), 49-51.

needs to consist of training in these skills rather than of interpretation and evaluation of readings. This emphasis would be a very useful one to apply to any training given teachers of developmental English, and it would help them to know that all freshman writing courses are skills courses, not just the classes for low students that they will be teaching.

The second day of the Cincinnati training for new teachers is partly spent in two simulated teaching sessions. Two different teaching styles are exhibited in sessions, each about 25 minutes long, to allow plenty of time for discussion to follow. Examples of topics for the short sessions were a short poem, a brief article illustrating tone, and an experiment on open classroom teaching. The point is not so much the material as the amount of planning that goes into successful teaching. New instructors need not be overwhelmed by a dazzling performance to get the point that teaching requires not only knowledge of one's material but organization, goal-setting, and flexibility as well.

The advantages of the Cincinnati plan, according to Joseph J. Comprone, are that it stresses teaching the process of writing rather than grading the final product and that it helps new people with the difficult task of teaching freshman composition by giving them a sense of structure and direction. He feels that training sessions

that merely tell novices the mechanical ways of meeting the syllabus and department demands are missing the point by not helping them learn how to teach the subject of writing as his model classes and planned discussions do.

Of course the University of Cincinnati plan is shorter than the other training programs discussed, but the emphasis of writing as a process rather than on composition as a course to assign grades is a worthy one which ought to find its way into any design for a developmental training program.

There does seem finally to be a trend in graduate schools to teach students to teach English. Generally, such classes include at least such topics as formulating theme assignments, scheduling the sequence of the syllabus, grading papers, evaluating writing with students, and learning to write the types of writing which might be assigned. This seems a minimum program for all graduate assistants.

Anyone planning to teach developmental English, however, needs more training in grammar and mechanics, as well as more training in counseling of students.

Training in grammar and mechanics should include review of fundamental rules, of course, but the emphasis needs to be on acceptable variations from the rules and on reasons for problems in a student's learning the rules. An example of a typical problem area for most students is the plural subject. The rule is that a plural subject

takes a plural verb, but the use of this rule in the sentence "Ten are nine plus one" is clearly awkward. Another rule, that a double subject joined by and takes a plural verb, would make us say the sentence "My friend and advisor are coming" even if the friend and advisor are the same person. Use of genitive pronouns also is a problem, since "correct" and popular usages differ, for example, in such a statement as "Do you object to him/his joining us?" Once again the rule does not fit the real situation. Students will recognize this and tune the instructor out, along with the English teachers of years past who seemed equally removed from useful knowledge.

Some valuable applications of current teaching in linguistics can be made to teach students in a less restrictive way. Sets of exercises which emphasize the reason for adhering to the conventions of grammar, spelling, and punctuation are best for mature students. The key point here is for an instructor to stress the ease of communication which conventional standards gives and the problems in communication which arise from unconventional usage. Using pairs of sentences, many exercises can be devised to prove this point. Maxwell Nurnberg's Word Play offers many choices if the teacher doesn't want to make up his own. For example:

Which sentence shows extraordinary powers of persuasion?

- a. I left him convinced he was a fool.
- b. I left him, convinced he was a fool.

Which is a full apology?

- a. Mr. Speaker, I said the honorable senator was a liar. It is true and I am sorry for it.
- b. Mr. Speaker, I said the honorable senator was a liar, it is true, and I am sorry for it.

In the days of primogeniture what was the probable reply of the eldest son?

- a. I was their first.
- b. I was there first.

Which draft board's needs were the greater?

- a. The medical board accepted men with perforated eardrums.
- b. The medical board excepted men with perforated eardrums.⁸

Along with the message that communication depends on some standard usages, an instructor using such exercises can discuss problem words such as accepted/excepted in a new context and may get the students to remember the difference better as a result.

Another modern use of semantics is the concept of conjugation of adjectives, since we tend to use pleasant words to refer to ourselves, neutral words to refer to friends or the person we're talking to, and negative words to refer to others. A common example is Bertrand Russell's "I am slender; you are thin; he is skinny."⁹ Use of

⁸(New York: Dell, 1971), 90-91.

⁹Quoted in Robert R. Potter, Making Sense: Exploring Semantics and Critical Thinking (New York: Globe Book Company, Inc., 1974), p. 62.

exercises in the conjugation of adjectives can help an instructor discuss word connotation and semantics with students. Students react more favorably to this kind of approach which relates to the real world, than to lists of rules and grammar drills.

Another facet of training in grammar and mechanics ought to be the examination of texts offered for use by developmental students. Prospective teachers need to be aware of new ideas in textbook publishing, should be able to use programmed texts in part or whole (not just start at the beginning and work students through whether they all need work in the skills involved or not), and also be able to pick exercises which will help students with specific problems. One way of helping student teachers in this area would be to have them prepare a bibliography of helpful exercises on each of several problem areas, such as pronoun consistency. If different areas were required of each student and bibliographies were shared with other class members through copies, each student could then be well prepared to assign teachers exercises for actual student problems when teaching begins.

One valuable part of a teaching of composition class could be field visits to successful writing programs in nearby schools. In Florida this is possible because of the large number of community colleges. An alternative possibility would be the presentation of reports to the

class on articles and books describing writing programs at other schools. An excellent issue of College English in May, 1974, for example, describes in detail three successful programs in developmental writing at Forest Park Community College in St. Louis, Hinds Junior College in Mississippi, and Staten Island Community College. At the very least, students who plan to teach ought to be aware of the variety of ways developmental English is being and can be taught. Systems that are difficult to use like Lou Kelly's open classroom,¹⁰ need to be discussed also to at least give a parameter for teaching opposite to that of the traditional rigorously structured classroom.

As far as training in counseling goes, teaching assistants need to be aware of the differences among teenage and adult students, since many developmental programs, especially at community colleges, contain a high proportion of older students.

One new approach, called the "total effect" workshop, tries to get teachers to feel enough like students to see the places where methods of teaching prevent learning rather than help it. Kathleen Norell of Prince George's Community College, Largo, Maryland, stresses that the emotional climate of a classroom must be open for learning

¹⁰"Toward Competence and Creativity in an Open Class," College English, 35 (November, 1973), 644-660.

to occur and that teachers must be aware of the perceptual limitations of people, including themselves and students. To achieve this kind of perception about learning, Ms. Norell uses conferences to show better than lecturing could where learning breaks down. She also requires re-writing of themes after the conferences.¹¹

This kind of approach is similar to that used by the University of Illinois and Florida State University described earlier, in that teachers at these two schools write the same kinds of papers they will be assigning to their students later.

In addition to the usual components of a training program for teachers such as speech, grammar, history of the language, and advanced composition,¹² counseling must be a concern of those training developmental teachers. A good new book, Facilitative Teaching: Theory and Practice, by Joe Wittmer and Robert D. Myrick, offers quite a bit of help here, since without being too jargonistic (the real problem in the use of education texts by English departments) they present solid and useful information on improving interpersonal relationships.

¹¹"A 'Total Effect' Workshop: Resources and Results," College English, 35 (November, 1973), 190-93.

¹²Christensen, p. 165.

One of Wittmer and Myrick's ideas is that of a continuum of responses ranging from what they call non-facilitative (judging, advice, interpretation) to facilitative (understanding, clarification, questioning, information-giving). It sounds simplistic when so summarized, but going into the types of responses in detail with a group of prospective instructors would be a good way of getting them to avoid responses which stop communication, such as "You really ought to get a special tutor," or "Why didn't you learn this grammar rule in high school?" or "You should have learned this before now." Such responses make a student resentful and may block learning by arousing resistance.

Responses an instructor ought to learn to use are (1) giving information in a matter of fact manner ("Here are some things we will have to clear up before you can begin to rework your theme"), (2) asking questions that will get the appropriate kind of information, (3) clarifying what has been said to elicit a further response ("I gather that you began disliking English in your sophomore year in high school"), and (4) offering understanding to create a climate where honest and frank communication can occur ("You seem impatient with so many things to go over on your paper").

The kind of questions asked ought to depend on the kind of information wanted, according to Wittmer and Myrick. A closed question gets specific information

("When did you graduate from high school?"); an open question helps start the process of exploring a broad area ("What do you see as your needs in a writing class?"). Wittmer and Myrick stress that listening to the answer, both what is said and what is left unsaid, is vital to the questioning process.¹³

It seems to me that this kind of training in methods of counseling and interviewing is probably more useful than classes in psychological theory, at least for teachers who need to be able to deal with real situations.

Another useful course for the prospective teacher of developmental English would be business communications, since low students seem frequently to be aimed at more vocational than academic majors. Such a course would also help teachers learn to write clearly and concisely, which would be a valuable asset for a teacher once out on the job, both personally and professionally.

Until enough such graduate assistants can be trained, two-year schools seem to be ahead of four-year schools in providing low students with qualified teachers. Often coming from a secondary school environment, community college communications teachers are usually better-grounded in the fundamentals of language skills than their

¹³(Pacific Palisades, California: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1974).

four-year counterparts, who too often are beginning creative writing majors, or others at the bottom of the teaching hierarchy.

Credit

An area of serious discussion in programs is whether or not regular college credit should be allowed for the classes. There are two obvious sides to the question, either that college level work only should be allowed credit or that work performed in college satisfactorily ought to get some credit even if the work is at a precollege level. The real problem is that no two schools seem to give the same type of class, the same type of credit. While doing similar work, students can get no credit at all, get institutional credit (which does not count toward graduation), or get real college credit, depending on where they go to school.

Reading some 50 community or junior college catalogues from schools in Florida, Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee indicates the two-year approach to low students and their credit for the courses they take. Generally they have a reading program and special composition courses for low scores, even though such students are granted regular admission under the ubiquitous open-door policy. This special program

is variously called "Guided Studies," "Instructional Enrichment," "Basic Studies," "Developmental Studies," "Directed Studies," or "Progressive Studies." The label remedial is carefully avoided, although most of the literature on the programs indicates that a remedial philosophy is behind the programs, whatever they are labeled. All students are tested in some way to determine if they have to be or should be encouraged to take these courses, but ideas vary widely as to what "low" means.

One evidence of the remedial aspect of many of the courses is the fact that they offer institutional credit only. The hours must be paid for like regular hours, but they do not count toward a degree or toward transfer to a four-year school. This is a defensible position if the school's administration feels that allowing students the opportunity to attain college level skills is enough; that giving them transfer credit for courses that remediate deficiencies would lower the level of the school. Already sensitive about being labeled thirteenth and fourteenth grades by some educational materials publishers, apparently many two-year school administrations feel they must give at least the appearance of high level work in the classroom. This mislabeling may ignore the realities of their student body and do a disservice to their community by not serving developmental students, but these apparently are peripheral considerations.

A few schools have broken this pattern and allow the courses to count toward "career" or "technical" programs. They are Broward, Daytona Beach, Hillsborough, and Polk Community College in Florida, and the community college system in Virginia. It seems that students would be more motivated by a system that allows them to receive some tangible reward for their work, although a case can be made for the fact that a good teacher can motivate students whether or not they are getting credit for the course. Most low students recognize their deficiencies and are probably not surprised by having to do extra work to catch up.

There are a few bright spots in the credit area. I found five schools which put the low scorers in special classes of regular freshman English courses. They receive regular credit, but are given more intensive work—more hours per week with more emphasis on individualization of their programs. Central Florida, North Florida, and Palm Beach Community Colleges in Florida, Hinds Junior College in Raymond, Mississippi, and Cleveland State in Cleveland, Tennessee, all have such programs.

Another way of approaching the credit problem and still getting students up to regular college level writing is to make developmental classes flexible in length. Generally I found such flexible classes to be of the type in which institutional credit only is given, but at least this type of credit can usually be applied to certificate programs

of a vocational nature, which are the ones many low students are interested in (as opposed to transfer courses).

One such flexible course, at Gulf Coast Community College in Florida, allows students who have a B or better at mid-term to contract with the instructor to earn regular credit in English 101 or 110, the regular writing and reading courses. Thus a student would not necessarily have to take an extra year of English for no real credit if his skills were better than the placement test had indicated. In a similar way, Seminole Community College in Florida offers both credit and noncredit enrichment courses to get students up to the level where they can enter regular classes. The catalogue is not specific about how the regular level is defined, but apparently individual instructors are able to decide this subjectively.

An example of extra work being assigned developmental students is the system of Edison Junior College in Fort Myers, Florida, where clinics are held to correct writing weaknesses as well as weaknesses in math and reading. These clinics go on concurrently with the regular classes and are filled with students whose instructors feel they need extra help.

The Virginia system uses the meeting of behavioral objectives (more on them later in this chapter) to determine when students are ready to enter regular classes in English, biology, chemistry, data processing, and others.

Students receive variable credit for the behavioral objective courses (but it is applicable toward a degree), which is graded S, if objectives had been met, R (re-enroll), if the goals are not attained yet progress is being made in the course, or U, if the counselor must be seen to discuss the student's academic goals. In the latter case, the student may not enroll in the course again until two quarters have passed.

The use of flexible scheduling, by which developmental students can continue to go to a lab or clinic until their skills are raised enough for them to compete academically with regularly admitted students, seems a major advancement in the solution to the problem of the granting of credit to developmental students. Because he only gets a certain amount of credit no matter how long it takes to finish, a student is motivated to work as hard as possible. On the other hand, truly low students are not penalized for their poor background, just offered more time to catch up.

One other way of handling flexible scheduling is to give H or "hold" grades to students who have been trying very hard but are still not writing at an acceptable level. This has been done at the University of Florida for two years in the Special Services program and seems to be successful. Students who receive an H grade must continue to meet with their instructors the following quarter

and do extra work until they can write acceptably. A fairly minor problem with the H grade is that if a graduate assistant leaves the teaching program, his H students must be taken on by the program director. A new proposed writing laboratory will eliminate this problem as H students will be placed with tutors.

There is no easy answer to the question of whether or not college credit should be given for developmental classes. The only solution for a person planning a developmental program is that the decision should be made on reasoned grounds and be clearly explained to both prospective teachers and students. As long as students know from the beginning what is expected of them and realize that the reasons behind the decision are sound there should be little problem. As long as standards are consistent within a school the credit problem can be satisfactorily solved.

Grades

Assigning grades in a developmental class requires some of the same reasoning that is applied to the problem of credit. Should developmental students be graded by regular English department standards or given grades according to their standing within their own group?

At the University of Florida a problem has arisen because the developmental English classes are taught differently from the other developmental classes in logic,

institutions, history, and math. These other classes are usually taught by a lecture/tutorial method in which students spend much of their time in the precision teaching lab, where they take tests over small units of material from the course and are then drilled by a tutor until they pass the test and the unit.

Naturally the grades in the precision teaching lab are mostly A's by the end of the term because all units are eventually passed. Since the grades in composition are not all A's, students tend to feel that they are being graded too harshly in their English courses. The English department, of course, cannot grade sociologically or for positive motivation alone. The students must demonstrate that they can write at the college level, but the disparity does exist and leads to hard feelings and the usual charges of racism since many of the students are black.

Again there seems no easy answer to the problem. One new approach I feel bears looking into is the one used to evaluate business communications students at Western Michigan University. The reasoning behind the checkmark system, as it is called, is that what counts is how well the student can write at the end of the semester rather than all the mistakes that he made in the process of learning. Because the course requires about 16 papers in a semester, the system could easily be adapted to use in a composition course. The students are given the following explanation on the first day of classes:

"Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

40% determined by scores on two departmental exams
60% determined by work on written assignments

To determine your overall grade on the written assignments, use the following grade equivalents:

A=15 or 16 acceptable papers
B=13 or 14 acceptable papers
C=11 or 12 acceptable papers
D=10 acceptable papers
E=fewer than 10 acceptable papers

Each paper you hand in will be rated either 'acceptable' (checkmark) or 'needs revision' (no checkmark)."¹⁴ Since a checkmark was defined to the class as equivalent to B or better work and unlimited rewrites were allowed, students who ended up with high grades in the course either wrote pretty good papers to begin with or spent a lot of time practicing and getting better. Hatch feels that the system is especially good because it meets the conditions of current learning theory in that correct or desirable responses are rewarded and thus reinforced, and undesirable responses are corrected. ✓

Students under the checkmark system are motivated to spend some time doing each assignment, because rather than being graded and returned and forgotten, a poor paper

¹⁴Richard A. Hatch, "A Behavioral Grading System That Works," American Business Communication Association Bulletin, 38 (June, 1975), 2.

will have to be done again and again and again. Teachers under the system can spend less time writing comments on papers, because they no longer have to justify why the paper did not get an A; students must do the rewriting with a minimum of suggestion from the teacher. Another advantage is that a student "is forced to write better and better until he can write well."¹⁵ Rather than writing 15 or 16 C papers, a student must write at least ten B papers to pass the course at all. Unlike contract systems, a student under the checkmark system cannot contract for mediocre work.

Only about 50 percent of the papers turned in had to be rewritten in Hatch's experimental classes. I feel that this percentage would be higher in developmental composition classes, but the positive motivation offered by the system might prove me wrong. There will always be some students who just cannot cope with the work involved in the course, or who just do not get around to rewriting all the papers. I do feel that instead of allowing "a reasonable time" to turn in rewrites, as Hatch can do with his sophomores and juniors, I would set a firm time limit for them. In my experience, developmental students do better if they have fairly firm limits to operate in.

¹⁵Hatch, p. 5.

The advantages of the checkmark system to the teacher are obvious, especially for the teacher working with low students. Instead of always judging and evaluating what is wrong with a paper, the instructor can concentrate on the positive aspects and on explaining to the student how he can improve. The system seems a very good one for any class with a number of skill-building assignments, such as freshman composition courses.

Without trying such a new grading system, the problem of grading can best be solved by making clear from the outset of the class exactly what standards will be adhered to. Even if arguable, the system this way will at least be clear and students will know what is expected of them.

Scheduling the Developmental Program

Usually a whole curriculum of reading, writing, social studies, and psychology classes is given to the developmental students at a school, sometimes in block fashion, with the same group attending classes together for their first year of school. Among the catalogues I studied, there is also one listening class and one speech class offered. Generally there seems to be an attempt to offer enough variety so the student will become more well-rounded in all subject areas and skills he will need to be competent when he attains regular class level.

Extra classes scheduled for the developmental student range from the developmental psychology course offered at Clayton Junior College, Atlanta, which is primarily an adjustment class for the students to talk about their problems in getting used to college life, to the Communications Lab at St. Petersburg Community College, Florida, which gives extra help in reading, listening, and speech, to the writing labs at Santa Fe, Tallahassee, and Valencia Community Colleges in Florida, and Shelby State, Tennessee, and the Verbal Studies Laboratories in the Virginia Community College system.

Most currently used schedules combine a clinic or laboratory of some kind with regular classroom meetings, at least as far as verbal skills are concerned. A sample schedule for this type of class might be:

Monday: meet as a group, discuss the week's work,
pick up papers for that week
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: individual conferences,
do reading and writing assignments,
go to clinic for help with specific problems
Friday: meet as a group workshop and evaluate the
last assignment (which the instructor has
had the week to mark)

Another way of approaching scheduling is to use team instruction, as is done at the University of Washington. Students meet in a large group once a week and then meet the rest of the week in small groups often taught by

graduate assistants.¹⁶ This system has the dual advantage of using senior faculty members to teach the required material in lectures and of using graduate assistants to help students with individual writing problems, thus using personnel where they are most effective in each case. A further advantage of the team method would be that the English department can offer a uniform course and assume that students who pass it will write at the college level.

Another way of scheduling developmental writing classes is a writing laboratory. In their 1965 NCTE survey, Samuel Wiengarten and Frederick Kroeger found that two schools had writing laboratories. One met one of three weekly class periods to deal with specific student writing problems on an individual level, and was similar to my first scheduling proposal above. The other was a lab in which all papers were written in a laboratory setting.¹⁷ Apparently all teaching was strictly on an individual basis, with no class lectures over commonly needed material or group evaluation of writing problems. Such a class would require more staff than is usually assigned

¹⁶Jerome W. Archer and Wilfred A. Ferrell, comp. Research and Development of English Programs in the Junior College (Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1965), p. 95.

¹⁷English in the Two-Year College (Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1964).

in order to work successfully, but it might be a possibility for the very lowest group of students.

Individualization is certainly seen as a primary focus of new methods of teaching writing, since it seems to be the best way to be certain that each student is helped with his specific problems. William Rakaushas of Temple University compared a writing laboratory to a regular classroom in teaching composition and found that either approach improved student writing skills, but that the laboratory setup was superior in subjective ways because of the immediate feedback possible in the one-to-one relationship of student and staff during conferences on writing problems. By using assistants to do all the grading, his system freed the instructor to hold conferences and guide the students' efforts.¹⁸ As long as some uniform standards of grading were applied by the assistants, this idea is probably a good one, for like the University of Washington system, it puts personnel where they are most useful.

Aileen Creighton of Del Mar Community College in Corpus Christi goes into some detail about a similar type of laboratory setup:

¹⁸"A Comparative Study of a Laboratory Approach Versus a Conventional Approach to Teaching Developmental Freshman Composition at the University of Scranton," (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1973).

Research may soon tell us how to know whether the weak students we gather together will profit best from intensive work in vocabulary and developmental reading, or from composition work, or both. Certainly it is not grammar that they need, not more workbook drills—this much has long been demonstrated.

I think hope now lies also in the more extensive use of various self-tutoring materials now on the market. I can imagine a room, equipped as a sort of laboratory, with tape recorders and individual earphones to allow students to work individually with taped drills in phonetics, pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary; sets of programmed materials (carefully selected ones!) and some teaching machines would be available to allow each individual to 'teach' himself the particular matter that diagnostic testing had revealed him weak in. Teaching assistants to manage the laboratory would free the teacher for conferring, discussing, going over a student's writing with him—in short, helping him on those matters that are most important, matters of content, thought, reasoning.¹⁹

As I pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, physical plant is the least important thing in teaching writing to developmental students. Well-trained staff and useful materials are far more important than the latest equipment and audio-visual aids. As Marion Bashinski points out: "Logistically, the establishment and operation of a reading-and-writing laboratory need not be overwhelming, either in expense or in complexity. Even an office could serve as a resource center for instructors, as well as a workshop for a few students at a time. Financially,

¹⁹Archer and Ferrell, p. 86.

the cost would include a few copies of books, some file folders, a typewriter, and a duplicating machine, most of which items are already staples of every English department."²⁰

In Chapter VI, I will discuss some existing writing programs for developmental students that range from simple to complex. All have in common, however, deeply committed staff and well-organized programs.

²⁰"The English Laboratory: Teaching Students and Training Teachers," (unpublished paper presented at the NCTE meeting in Minneapolis, November, 1972), p. 9.

CHAPTER VI

SOME SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING PROGRAMS

So much of this study thus far has dealt with shortcomings in developmental programs that it is important to note that some model programs exist. In this chapter I will discuss nine existing developmental programs which have methods that could be successfully borrowed.

The programs outlined here are successful for good reasons. They are well planned and organized; they make clear to students and teachers just what is expected in the course. All make the teaching of writing their concern rather than the teaching of literature and literary writing, and they tend to teach practical writing such as students will do later on.

Florida State University

A very nearly perfect English laboratory is run at Florida State University. It combines reading and writing skills to provide a more total approach to communications problems in students than is usually seen.

The relationship between reading and writing is logical: because writing encodes information and reading decodes it, the two skills easily work together. Marian Bashinski has received requests from 36 schools so far for copies of her paper on the lab presented at the 1972 NCTE convention in Minneapolis, so it is apparent that her method offers hope for help in teaching writing.

The Florida State University English laboratory offers variable credit and is run on a pass/fail basis. Student weaknesses are diagnosed by a pretest which is computer-scored, giving each student a print-out pinpointing his areas of concentration for lab work. In both reading and writing, patterns and the relationships between parts are stressed, as in both verbal skills this matter of structure can help a student comprehend and produce more easily. The study of expository patterns helps both the reader and writer find what they are looking for faster in a collection of written words. As the quarter progresses, students work on reading rate and comprehension, study skills, and developmental writing skills, including mechanics and organization.

Director Marian Bashinski's teaching philosophy is as follows: "If a student has failed to learn some prerequisite skill which would enable him to obtain maximum benefit from whatever subject I am teaching, then I should either help him to develop that skill, or at least

give him the opportunity to learn it elsewhere."¹ She has designed the English laboratory at Florida State University with this philosophy in mind. Rather than condemn or ignore students who have writing or reading problems, she helps them overcome their deficiencies with specific suggestions and assignments.

English 100, as the writing program is called, can be taken for credit (one to three semester hours) or not. Students sign up for a section of A, B, or C English 100 depending on whether they want to spend two hours a week for one credit hour (A) or four hours a week for two credits (B) or six hours for three credits (C). They then go to the laboratory and sign up for times they will actually attend. The laboratory is open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays with additional hours from 5:45 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Wednesday nights. As far as the registrar's computer is concerned, students remain in whatever section they signed up for, but the flexible scheduling seems to promote better attendance and Bashinski claims that record-keeping is not a problem. It also seems a positive idea that the lab is open at least one evening a week. A necessity in community colleges, where a significant portion of the student body is employed, evening hours are a good

¹Bashinski, p. 1.

idea at four-year schools if they plan to serve their population well.

One of two tests is given students at the beginning of the term, either the College English Placement Test by Haugh and Brown or the English Usage section of the SRA Junior College Placement Program. The tests are scored by computer and each student is given a print-out cataloging his areas of strength and weakness. This summary of errors helps the laboratory staff immediately identify materials that will help each student improve his verbal skills. This immediate and specific assignment possibility is one of the best features of the laboratory at Florida State University. Of course, the objective nature of the testing means that only grammar and mechanics problems can be remediated this way, but compared to an average composition class where these problems are virtually ignored, the laboratory is definitely more successful in helping students with their verbal skills' problems.

The summary of errors is keyed to a list of 18 objectives on a Writing Skills Index. Each objective has from one to three sources of material for review to help students achieve mastery of the objective. For example, objective seven, "Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers," offers three sources for help: Dodge, How to Read and Write in College, pages 75-82; Jones et al., An Approach to College Writing, Chapter 8; and Romine, Sentence Variety,

pages 5-16 and 97-114. A student is thus able to find material that will provide immediate help quickly. Laboratory staff can assign certain exercises or give personal help too, but the summary of errors print-out and the Writing Skills Index combine to make self-help possible and useful.

In addition to these specific assignments, and material on spelling, vocabulary, and study skills, there are units on writing included in the laboratory program. Each unit (some divided into more than one part) is programmed for individual study and requires completion of certain assignments and two conferences with an instructor. The first unit, Rhetorical Mode: Thesis and Support, for example, is divided into two segments, "Pre-Writing Preparation" and "Writing the First and Final Drafts." Completing the first segment of the unit results in a planning page which has the thesis, audience, writer-image, and a list of details which will be developed into sentences. Two check tests are included, one ranking items from general to specific (the list "book, publication, A Tale of Two Cities, novel" would be rearranged to "publication, book, novel, A Tale of Two Cities" for example) and one analyzing thesis statements. The latter exercise, coming after considerable discussion of appropriate information to be included in a thesis (must not be vague, must express writer's attitude,, must be a statement in complete sentence form,

etc.), seems a helpful one to get student papers started correctly.

Including selecting an audience and a writer-image in the planning makes it possible for a student to focus the paper on a specific audience and forces him to think about tone and diction, among other considerations.

The second segment of unit one continues the development of the theme through topic sentences, developing details, transitions, sentence variety, and title. A long section on types of introductions would be useful in getting students on the right track to begin with. Examples of introductions based on personal experience, anecdote, statistics, quotation, question, and straw man are given and discussed.

Unit two is called Revision: Improving What You Write and bases revisions on four levels where improvement might be needed: words, sentences, paragraphs, the essay. The last level, the essay, includes improvement in unity and coherence. Again the unit ends with a conference in which student improvements are discussed with the instructor.

The unit on revision may not immediately make students into competent copyeditors, but at least it has enough detail to give students a beginning outline of areas to look at for corrections and improvements. In keeping with the importance of learning revision, the revision of

theme one counts as theme two. This would motivate students to do their best, as their work would be really evaluated instead of just checked off when it was handed in with corrections.

There are further units on classification and illustration, definition, and comparison and contrast. Other aspects of verbal skills handled in the laboratory at Florida State University include reading, study skills, vocabulary, and spelling. Dr. Bashinski has developed a reading and study skills index like her writing one. Rate, comprehension, and critical reading are covered among other things.

Three hundred and thirty students were enrolled in the English laboratory in the fall of 1974. The laboratory is staffed by six assistants putting in ten hours a week each plus Dr. Bashinski's full-time hours as director and instructor. Since the laboratory is open 32 periods a week the apparent student-staff ratio would be about 3:10. With this kind of possible interpersonal relationship, it is no wonder that the laboratory is successfully remediating verbal skills problems at Florida State University.

The physical set-up at Florida State University is simple; it consists of the director's office and two large rooms equipped with tables and chairs. There are bookshelves and carrels for tape recorders, because the Educulture Tutorial Systems Mini-courses are part of the

materials offered for students to choose from. These book-cassette combinations on 15 topics ranging from "Basic Sentence Patterns" to "Using Standard Punctuation" are apparently good for individualizing instruction on these topics as they are self-contained and can be used without instructor supervision.

The course described in Chapter IV trains graduate assistants for the entire English program at Florida State University, while a further course, English 594, "Teaching English as a Guided Study," trains graduate assistants for the laboratory especially. With the emphasis on individualizing instruction, teaching reading, teaching composition, and understanding compatible concepts of composition and reading, this extra training course produces competent staff for the laboratory.

It seems to me that the English laboratory at Florida State University is about as good as that type of operation can be. Rather than being thrown into regular classes in freshman composition to struggle, the lower-scoring freshmen are given a carefully planned chance to improve their skills and get college credit for it.

Hinds Junior College

One approach to teaching composition that I think would be especially effective in a community college is

the modular one used at Hinds Junior College, Raymond, Mississippi. With a faculty of 25 instructors (19 full-time and six part-time) the English Department there offers students a choice of ten approaches in first semester Freshman English and a choice of eight approaches second semester, as follows:

Approaches offered only in Freshman Composition I
 Basic Independent Study
 Self-Discovery Through Writing
 Thematic Writing
 Writing About Science Fiction and the Occult
 Contemporary Composition

Approaches offered in Freshman Composition I and II
 Business Writing
 Technical Writing
 Writing About Current Issues
 Honors Composition
 Independent Study

Approaches offered in Freshman Composition II
 Writing About Literature
 Writing About Film and Drama
 Creative Writing²

To achieve a uniform program for all students, during the first semester all ten approaches offered cover each of the following seven units of study: planning the composition, patterns of organization, the formal outline, the paragraph, documentation, the word, and the sentence. In the second semester, all approaches must include a unit on the library research paper as well as two of the

²The English Faculty, "English at Hinds Junior College," College English, 35 (May, 1974), 921. Further information is taken from the entire article, pages 917-45.

following units: patterns of organization, literary analysis, imaginative writing, and practical communication.

Because of these well-planned course objectives, students at the end of their freshman year at Hinds Junior College have been exposed to the same set of rhetorical principles and emphases regardless of which approach they signed up for. According to the faculty description of their program, record-keeping is not a problem. Each student's transcript shows six semester hours credit in Freshman Composition I and II regardless of which two sections he completes.

Several of the approaches are especially geared to the lowest open admissions students, since about 25 percent of the Hinds Junior College students are really not ready for college composition yet. (The faculty defines this group as having ACT scores in English below 14, Purdue scores in English below 105, and below average high school grades in English.) The first semester options most geared to these students are Basic Independent Study, Business Writing I, and Technical Writing I; those offered second semester are Business Writing II, Technical Writing II, and Independent Study II.

The course designed specifically for low scorers or others with poor skills and little confidence is Basic Independent Study. Classes of 20 meet three hours a week for four weeks, then in groups of six to eight with the

instructor for the rest of the term. They are given deadlines and general writing assignments and turn in a plan, a rough draft, and a final copy each time. The assignments basically fall into categories of description (to encourage observation and vocabulary growth), narration (of personal experience), and explanation (of personal conclusions or opinions, validated with outside information).

Grammar and usage are covered in a lab unit—a score of 80 percent or better must be made on a diagnostic test over four areas: the English verb, agreement of subject and verb, the dependent clause, and the coordinate conjunction. Tapes and written instructions and self-tests are used to help each student complete this unit if he cannot exempt it. Other grammar problems are handled as they come up in papers, as the Hinds faculty found through their research that 80 percent of all errors occur in the above-named areas.

The business writing options cover letters and reports as well as communication theory, obtaining and granting of financial credit, and job searches. The technical writing options cover the writing of instructions, process explanations, definitions, descriptions of mechanisms, analyses using cause/effect, summaries, business letters, a library research paper, and reports. Both courses are practical writing courses with the emphasis on application rather than theory.

One especially strong feature of the technical writing program at Hinds Junior College is that the course's content was based on consultation with area industries and service facilities, so that students completing the program are well prepared for local employment. Instructors at Hinds have written several texts on business and technical writing so that other schools can benefit from their experience in these areas. Pickett and Laster's Writing and Reading in Technical English and Pickett's Practical Communication are two of these helpful books.

Independent Study I and II are courses of great flexibility which are taken by students of all intellectual levels. Students can work at their own pace, taking more or less time for their work than would be possible in a traditional classroom with a more rigid schedule. If students finish early, they are released from the program until the next semester's courses begin; if they need extra time, a grade of IP is given and they have the next semester to finish. Both early and late finishing possibilities are handled the same way in the Basic Independent Study course described earlier.

The Independent Study Options generally consist of traditional freshman composition activities handled in nontraditional ways. Some regular classroom sessions are held, along with small group meetings, and individual conferences. Much like the Florida State University program,

this one uses many mimeographed units containing information, activities, self-tests, and writing assignments. Hinds Junior College has a testing center where the longer papers can be written at a student's convenience.

The Hinds Junior College Learning Resources Center offers a multimedia approach to learning and contains carrels, a television studio, and audio-visual materials to attack learning problems in other than traditional ways. Other classes than English are experimenting with multimedia self-teaching courses. The testing center mentioned earlier fits into the overall learning resources center plan by allowing students a place to take unit tests whenever they are ready to take them.

The use of instructional objectives at Hinds Junior College is less rigid than in the Virginia Community College system, but would pacify a state legislature and be workable at the same time. The systems approach to learning offered by Hinds Junior College is a very good one for a diverse student body. Perhaps its strongest point is that writing skills are emphasized over learning about literature, for far too many schools seem to think that all freshman English students are going to become creative writers or critics.

Forest Park Community College

An urban school whose enrollment is half black, Forest Park Community College in St. Louis has another type

of successful developmental writing program. The bottom five percent of entering students at Forest Park Community College are counseled into a separate division which offers a semester to a year of precollege work for students whose academic records seem to indicate that they will have problems in writing. Generally no credit is given for this very remedial work; the students involved have scored below the tenth percentile on the SCAT test and graduated in the bottom third of their high school class. If the writing laboratory teachers feel that the scores and grades do not reflect a student's abilities, he or she can be moved into a credit course at any time during the term.

This separate program appears to be a feasible way of handling the very poorest students if they must be treated differently from "regular" students. At least only the lowest are involved and the rest are given a chance to try college work. In too many community colleges and junior colleges, the assumption seems to be that many students must pay for a year of creditless classes before they reach a high enough level to join regular classes.

All other freshman English students at Forest Park Community College take a first semester course based on the nature of the language. The aims of the class, as agreed upon by the department, are that by the end of the semester students should:

1. Be more confident of their ability to communicate in writing
2. Be more fluent writers
3. Have written regularly in a journal about anything at all of their choosing
4. Experience, understand, and internalize the following about the nature of language:
 - a. that it is spoken
 - b. that it is symbolic
 - c. that both the symbols and the systems of symbols are arbitrary
 - d. that it is changing
5. Experience, understand and internalize that no one dialect is inherently superior to any other
6. Experience, understand, and internalize some social, political, and economic implications of language, including such issues as sexism and racism
7. Experience, understand, and internalize the relationship between a human being and his language
8. Be writing directly and vigorously
9. Be able to support generalizations with specific statements or examples
10. Have gained some experience in expository writing.³

The journal mentioned in objective three is ungraded, with teacher comments facilitative rather than corrective ("Could you give me an example here? I am not sure what you are saying.") As in most journal experiments, student reaction varies widely, from those who write constantly to those who write selfconsciously and carefully and want more teacher direction.

The really new and positive approach practiced at Forest Park Community College is the emphasis on language as a changing and growing medium of communicative exchange. One

³Richard Friedrich and Elizabeth McPherson, "English at Forest Park Community College," College English, 35 (May, 1974), 886. The entire article covers pages 879-916.

idea stressed is that writing and talking are very different ways of communicating. Each time a student explains what he really meant in a written exercise being read to the class he learns that nonverbal communication is a real entity and he must compensate for its lack in writing by being careful to add enough details and say exactly what he means.

One exercise used at Forest Park Community College to show another side of communication is to have each student write his or her name on a slip of paper which is then hidden some distance from the classroom. Written instructions on finding the name are given to another student. If the name is found, the theme succeeds. If not, the paper fails, even if it is written neatly and correctly as far as grammar and mechanics go.

The power of language to discriminate racially and sexually is studied also, with a final emphasis on the fact that even if a person discriminating on the basis of language usage is a bigot, this person might be in a position to hire or not hire a student or approve or disapprove a recommendation or report. Examples of dialect differences and semantic principles are used here to get the point across.

Students who undergo such a linguistically oriented writing program are comforted to learn that they already know a lot about the system of English. They learn through

nonsense words and phrases that word order and inflectional endings help them make sense of nonsense. Correctness becomes less the point than successful communication as the system of language change is discussed.

This first semester English course would be a good one for motivated students and teachers. While agreeing with the theory behind the linguistics approach at Forest Park Community College, I am not sure it would lead to college level writing as far as the details of grammar and mechanics are concerned. Much would depend on individual instructors, of course. Strong points of the system include its clear outline of objectives and aims so students know what is expected of them and the obvious commitment of the faculty to the language system aspects of the program. At any rate, the approach works successfully at Forest Park Community College.

The second semester of the freshman English program at Forest Park Community College is modular. The semester is divided into three five-week sessions and between forty and sixty different short courses are offered for student choice. To get credit for the second semester of freshman English, a student must complete three of the modules successfully. About the only restriction placed on the students is that only one module can be taken during the first five weeks. After that, two modules can be taken at once, if the student wants an extra hour of credit, or does not do well in one

module and needs to catch up during the next five-week period. During the first five weeks, skills-type courses are offered: test-taking and paper presentation, writing a term paper, nursing course notes, dialect shifts, sentence manipulation, spelling, manipulative techniques of advertising, editorials. revising papers, and writing explanation. Later classes are more of the special interest variety: language of film, women's views, black issues, police society, writing for money, story writing, report writing, vocabulary, and the Playboy man and the Cosmopolitan woman. A booklet published midway in the first semester describes the courses and their costs (some have a small lab fee), grading policies, and class size, so that students are aware of their choices before time to register.

There is quite a bit of record-keeping involved in Forest Park Community College's modular semester, but they claim that a competent department secretary can handle the averaging of grades and list-making the system entails without too much trouble. Again, the system might not work for everyone, but it is successful at Forest Park Community College.

The University of Iowa

An even more innovative approach to classroom teaching is taken at the University of Iowa, where the

writing laboratory and open-class project prepare freshmen to take a sophomore departmental theme exam successfully. Lou Kelly feels that classes should be "communities of learners" and rather than have specific daily tasks, they share experiences, first by talking, then by writing them for the group. The approach is called "talking on paper"⁴ and the emphasis is on communication rather than accurate following of artificial grammar rules, at least for the first of the term. When a student can fill a page with ease, when the writing muscles have been loosened up, then he is introduced to the concept of "copyreading" to locate errors and constructions that hinder communication.

Another positive feature of the Iowa program is the use of an unrequired reading list. Kelly wants students to see reading as another kind of personal experience than the academic drudgery engendered by required readings and organized interpretations. The reading list offers students some topics to choose from for writing when they cannot think of their own (like the "Idea Book" at Florida State University) and also may introduce them to books for personal pleasure for a change.

An important part of Kelly's writing project is peer evaluation. The instructor is only a guide, with the community of learners in the class doing the talking and evaluating.

⁴Lou Kelly, From Dialogue to Discourse: An Open Approach to Competence and Creativity, (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1972), 27.

This method, like the approach discussed in Peter Elbow's Writing Without Teachers (discussed in chapter IV), at the very least helps humanize English for students who have hated the class for years. For once someone cares what they have to say and thinks they know something which could be profitably shared. Even if total peer evaluation is not practical because beginning composition students do not have enough background to judge writing objectively, allowing some class comments on papers read aloud is a good way to help students realize that others in the class have the same writing problems they do and that it is easier to see someone else's mistakes than your own.

The open-class project really works at the University of Iowa and could probably be profitably used at other schools. The disadvantage of such a method used for teaching low students is that it takes much more work and commitment than most graduate students, however well trained, are able to put into a class with their own personally heavy schedules of school and work. Encounter group classes like these sound easy, but rather than an hour of rapping with students, such a class is a one hour performance where a teacher is "on" all the time. It is not a method to be used by anyone who has little time for class preparation.

The advantages of an open classroom lie in the rapport which can be achieved between students and instructor, but the disadvantages of staffing might make it a less than perfect method for adoption elsewhere.

Santa Fe Community College

At Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, Florida, a writing laboratory is offered for one or two hours credit or it can be taken without receiving credit, especially if a student needs help only on one paper for another class. The course requires a student to spend about one-half hour a week for one credit earned. (In their set-up it is assumed that the actual writing will be done outside of this time period.) The assigned work is generally related to other classes than English so that help is thus give to students with history, sociology, or humanities papers to write rather than themes about literature. Since English 103, the regular composition class, is required of all students, the laboratory class, English 111, is an extra help available to students who need it.

Run on a one-to-one basis out of the two instructors' offices, the writing laboratory at Santa Fe Community College generally consists of half-hour conferences with students on their writing problems. As far as grammar is concerned, they first lay a groundwork of interpersonal communication and establish specific needs, and then assign prescriptive helps such as the New Century series, Brown and Pearsall's Spelling, and so on, depending on each student's problems.

The noncredit version of the Santa Fe Community College writing laboratory is similar to this one-to-one credit approach, as sometimes a student will schedule weekly appointments with one of the instructors to try to work out a writing problem but not want to get credit for the course. The instructors are also available to help students on a one-time only basis, such as helping with a paper for another class or proofreading.⁵

The analogy of the writing laboratory at Santa Fe Community College would be to an English composition class taught to one person at a time. The emphasis is on order, as writing moves from words to sentences to paragraphs to compositions. The method would work with foreign students as well as with very low students. More advanced students can move through the New Century program faster than foreign students, of course. It might even be better if these better students could plunge right into writing and then have exercises assigned out of printed order to help them with specific problems rather than making them begin at the beginning and work their way through the New Century series.

The strong points of the Santa Fe Community College laboratory are its student-teacher rapport and prescriptive

⁵Interview with Norma Dew and Juanita Jackson, Santa Fe Community College writing instructors, April, 1974.

treatment of writing problems. In many ways it is like the simplest version of Marian Bashinski's set-up at Florida State University: an office with a few books and a sympathetic instructor where students can come for help with their writing problems. More students can be taken care of more efficiently in the big Florida State University laboratory with its larger staff and computer scoring, of course.

Staten Island Community College

Even though classes there are limited to 16 students and a skills center is available for extra help with grammar and mechanics (or as an alternative to repeating the course), the English I program at Staten Island Community College does not seem to be entirely successful, perhaps because it offers too many options.⁶

The basic idea behind the program is that writing a lot improves a student's writing skills. Instructors use daily journals and themes motivated by a wide variety of modern media, such as film, music, collages, and so on. Students may read aloud, write mostly in class, or work on group projects such as writing a new constitution, a marriage contract, or class by-laws.

Each teacher of English I at Staten Island Community College is a volunteer and is encouraged to experiment

⁶Ira Shor, ed. "Reading and Writing at Staten Island Community College," College English, 35 (May, 1974), 945-997.

with innovative teaching methods. Group meetings are held for the staff to share their successful and unsuccessful experiences. Since all of the instructors teach regular classes as well as the developmental English I classes, they have a basis for comparison of types of students and methods that work.

Scheduling several sections at the same time enables teachers to try team teaching, as well as allowing students to transfer from one section to another if they cannot seem to work for a certain teacher. If a student begins to miss class meetings teachers are required to call him or her at home to find out what the problem is. This concern by instructors often keeps students in school by giving them an opportunity to face their problems and try again.

The grades assigned are pass or incomplete. Students who do not pass can either repeat the course or go to the Skills Center for individual work. Besides helping students with reading problems (ascertained not through a battery of tests, but by having the students read aloud when they first come to the laboratory) the center staff works with students who need help with their other verbal skills.

The Skills Center is in a trailer and is outfitted with two moveable blackboards, bookshelves, about ten tables and a variety of chairs. There is none of the electronic equipment associated with highly media-oriented laboratories. They have the posters that are part of Dr. Caleb

Gattegno's "Words in Color" reading program as their functional decoration on the walls. There is no set receiving method for the students who come to the Skills Center (such as registration, questionnaires, and testing) since the Staten Island Community College theory is that students need personal work at once rather than indirect testing of their problems. A student is asked to read aloud or do free writing or some other activity which enables the instructor to observe what the student's problems are. The staff feels that the only way actually to have individualized instruction is to begin right away to deal on a one-to-one basis with the students, so testing is omitted in the Skills Center.

The Reading and Study Skills Center at Staten Island Community College is similar to that at Santa Fe Community College in that reading is the emphasized skill rather than writing. Writing help is individualized completely. It seems to me that a more efficient way of teaching low students to write better would be to use individualized materials to take care of needs in grammar and mechanics and offer some classroom work in the composing process as well. Money and staff are generally just not available for completely individualized teaching on a one-to-one basis as is done at Staten Island Community College.

The unstructured format of English I at Staten Island Community College leads to some other problems

besides inefficient use of staff. According to their own evaluation, the instructors' worst failure was the journal writing project, which lost both student and faculty enthusiasm because it was so undirected no one accomplished any writing after an initial burst of enthusiasm. A prime criterion of the Staten Island Community College program seems to be that writing should not be confused with grammar, so the journal was not corrected or graded. A worthy goal, maybe, especially because of the overemphasis on grammar in past English programs, but not a very practical one for teachers of low students. Discussing ideas and their expression are crucial in developing students' logical abilities, but developmental students also need help with the details of grammar and mechanics if they are to learn to write acceptably.

Some of the ways the Staten Island Community College faculty get their students to think more logically and write more effectively are worth trying out, if they could be used along with a more comprehensive grammar and mechanics program. Many are like Lou Kelly's open classroom techniques such as first day introductions, in-class interviews, and character sketches of fellow classmates.

Another positive approach to language use was the translation of slang passages (student-written from their compiled dictionary of slang expressions) into formal English. Each student wrote a paragraph of each theme

version, passing papers on for completion by other students. This particular project taught the writing of argument also, for students were forced to make the papers coherent even if they did not agree with what the previous student had written. In addition, of course, the various levels of language were compared, and students discovered that some slang expressions cannot really be translated at least not without using many extra words. Language appropriateness also was learned, since some situations exist where only slang is appropriate (prison, for example) and there are others (such as job interviews) where a more standard English is required.

One writing exercise had students write about a common experience like going to the dentist from the point of view of the patient and then again from the point of view of the dentist. A similar exercise had students describe something like a paper clip to a person who had never seen one. One emphasis of the Staten Island Community College program is to use common experience topics so students will at least have information to start writing about. At the very least, the instructors claim that their students are more confident about expressing themselves on paper and in class when they finish the developmental writing course.

A speech segment of the remedial English program at Staten Island Community College used interviewing,

advertising, astrology, and diction as topics. In the diction exercise groups of three students pick a topic; two discuss it while the third rapidly writes down everything that has been said. All three of them then edit the writing to find better ways of saying "fantastic," etc. The speech class involves lots of reading aloud, too. Plays are especially good because they are fun to read and not usually very demanding in vocabulary. Using material like this gives built-in topics for discussion and structures a class more than just current events topics can. As Sabina Johnson found at the University of California at Berkeley, when they used current sociopolitical issues as discussion and theme topics: "As neither we nor the students knew much about, say, the merits of trading with Red China or how to curb the population explosion, it seemed we were making a weekly exchange of cliches, with abysmal student writing the end product."⁷

The University of Florida

The developmental English course at the University of Florida in Gainesville is offered through the special services program in which 5 percent of the freshman class is enrolled. These students, who received lower than

⁷Sabina Johnson, p. 672.

acceptable placement scores but had compensating high school records in some other way, take special English classes as well as special sections of math and institutions. They receive college credit for these freshman courses and then go into regular sophomore classes the next year.

A placement essay is written during the first week of classes to determine if any students might be able to enter regular English classes even though they entered the university in the special services program.

The theory behind the developmental English course at the University of Florida is that developmental students need three things: to be encouraged to express themselves, to be taught to control and organize their writing, and to be taught the mechanics of punctuation and spelling and grammar. Mildred Hill, the program director, is wary of programs that do only one of these things and feels that too much emphasis on free writing may produce students who cannot communicate in writing at the college level, while too much emphasis on grammar will discourage students by seeming a repetition of their unsuccessful high school performance in English classes.⁸

⁸Interview with Mildred Hill, July, 1975.

The developmental English course at the University of Florida is three quarters long; students are encouraged to enter in the summer to allow for extra time in case they encounter difficulties in any one course. The three quarters are designed to move developmental students from expression to control in writing. The first course, 11X, is planned to give students confidence that they have something to say. Emphasis is on free writing, journals, oral expression, and class discussions in addition to theme writing. Peer evaluation through oral class reading of themes or the publishing of a class newsletter is encouraged. Toward the end of the quarter students begin to be taught thesis writing and organization, but the aim of the first quarter is to get students writing comfortably without feeling that they will make too many mistakes.

The second course, 12Y, stresses organization. Rather than continue to write out of their experience, students are encouraged to write about their readings in anthologies such as Negro Caravan or Black Voices. Individual conferences continue to be held this quarter, especially with students who have problems with grammar and mechanics. This portion of the subject matter—grammar and mechanics—is generally treated in the conferences rather than in the class itself, unless most of the members of the class seem to be having a similar problem and class discussion of it might be worthwhile.

The third course, 13Z contains what Dr. Hill calls "purposeful writing,"⁹ but also introduces some creative writing so that students can experiment. Students also become acquainted with more patterns of exposition (comparison-contrast, process, etc.) than they had in previous quarters.

Graduate assistants and instructors teaching in the developmental writing program at the University of Florida do not undergo a formal training program, but they meet as a group monthly during the quarter to discuss the program's progress and to demonstrate successful classroom techniques to each other. At the beginning of each quarter each staff member is given a copy of the detailed statement of purpose for the program and several texts are recommended. The director tries to visit one class of each graduate assistant during each quarter and turns in an evaluation to the English Department every quarter on each graduate assistant.

Flexibility is provided by an H (for Hold) grade which can be given under two conditions: if (1) "the student has been putting forth a significant effort but still is not doing passing work" or (2) "the student has shown throughout the quarter considerable effort to do

⁹Mildred Hill, "Some Reflections on Objectives for English 11Z, 12Y, and 13Z," unpublished mimeographed program description, June, 1975, p. 4.

the work but is unable to complete all of the assignments and asks for additional time to complete the course requirements."¹⁰ Students who receive the H grade are usually turned over to a tutor for specific extra work agreed upon by the instructor, student, and tutor until the students have completed the course work at an acceptable level, although instructors may retain their own students for the extra help as long as the students see the tutor for additional assistance.

The flexibility provided by the H grade is a benefit to students who may need extra help to be able to compete in college studies. The passing grade in the developmental English classes is a C; no D's are given, and "instructors are asked to give a failing grade only to students who are not doing a minimum of work."¹¹

Throughout the year, instructors in the developmental writing program are asked to discuss language in a way accepting deviations from so-called standard English as alternative ways of communicating rather than as mistakes which should be eradicated. Because 90 percent of the students in the special services program are black,

¹⁰Mildred Hill, "The H Grade: English Program for Special Service Students," unpublished mimeographed paper, June, 1975, p. 1

¹¹Hill, "Some Reflections," p. 7.

this acceptance means discussing black dialect and bi-dialectism in class and letting students learn enough about language systems, both oral and written, for them to be able to "make a responsible choice regarding their own language patterns."¹²

Because of the high proportion of blacks in the University of Florida developmental program, the recently proposed writing laboratory has requested a staff of three black tutors with master's degrees and teaching experience who will hold instructor rank. Dr. Hill feels that black tutors are more successful in dealing with the writing problems of black students than white instructors because the black tutors can discuss black dialect less critically and act as models for students, since the tutors have already achieved success in the mostly white university environment.

The developmental writing program at the University of Florida has tried several approaches in its relatively few years of existence. This latest program, which combines individual help in the mechanics and grammar problems of students with encouragement in expression, seems to be a successful way of covering needed material. The idea of a black staff for black students may also be a worthwhile innovation for other schools to consider for beginning courses.

¹²Ibid., p. 3.

Tallahassee Community College

Another developmental writing program is that at Tallahassee Community College. The Writing Lab (English 100) offers two hours of institutional credit for two hours of attendance a week and is staffed by 16 different instructors (15 working two hours a week each and one eight hours). Like the Santa Fe Community College Laboratory, the New Century series is the main remedial program used. A beginning diagnostic inventory pinpoints areas of weakness. The faculty-written test has 100 questions as follows: ten each on spelling, subject-verb agreement, diction, commas, pronoun reference, capitalization, abbreviation, and end marks, punctuating, quotations and conversations, using apostrophes, and fragments; and five each on misplaced modifiers and parallel structure. This test along with a 300-word writing sample helps instructors decide whether the freshman needs to be in English 100 (laboratory, institutional credit) or English 101 (freshman composition, regular credit).

One problem with the Tallahassee Community College program is that all kinds of innovative ideas are done in English 101—peer teaching using sophomore class tutors, a contract system, a newsletter-literary magazine published by class members, an IBM dictation equipment theme comments—and the English 100 students not only get none

of them but are stuck with institutional credit and the rigid New Century series. There seems to be a conflict in philosophy between the really fine teachers I talked to at Tallahassee Community College and some administrative feeling that open admissions students must be remediated before they can enter the "real" program. Texts as diverse as Lee Martin's The Five Hundred-Word Theme and Warren Clare and Kenneth Ericksen's Multimediate are used, which fact gives some idea of the conflict between old and new ways of teaching English being experienced at Tallahassee Community College. Martin's book stresses organization and patterns; Multimediate is relevance-oriented, with essays on drugs and film and race. Tallahassee Community College is a good example of a school whose program helps low students with their specific problems and only then allows them to enter regular classes. While this is a valid approach it seems to me less effective than a more integrated one.

Clayton Junior College

The remedial program at Clayton Junior College south of Atlanta consists of developmental classes in math, reading, writing, and psychology. In the fall of 1973, for example, five sections of reading (English 95), six of writing (English 99), nine of math (six of Math 98

and three of Math 99) and five of psychology (Psychology 98) were offered. Generally students in the developmental studies program take all four courses, although particularly the writing and math courses are recommended to students in regular classes who seem to need extra help. Courses numbered below 100 receive only additional credit at Clayton Junior College, so some students are thus required to pay for 16 quarter hours before they enter regular classes.

The developmental writing course at Clayton Junior College is typical of many remedial programs. The texts used are the Harbrace College Workbook (because the Harbrace Handbook is used school-wide), and Writing Skills I and II and Paragraph Patterns from the McGraw-Hill Skills System series. According to the program director, the objectives of the class are to:

sharpen your writing skills so that each of you will be able to recognize and use standard English grammar and punctuation at will, compose effective, correct sentences and paragraphs, analyze a communication problem and choose appropriate kinds of sentences and paragraphs to solve it, and evaluate sentences and paragraphs for effectiveness and clarity.¹³

A problem I found in teaching the English 99 course was that the texts did not seem to really help my students meet the objectives. The McGraw-Hill series is programmed in the usual way with answer blanks and following answers

¹³ Judy Brown, unpublished syllabus for English 99, Fall, 1973.

(to be covered with a card until the question is answered) for each "frame" of material. The two volumes on writing skills contain a total of 13 chapters on grammar and punctuation, with topics from "Sentences and Clauses" to "Punctuation." Each chapter is between ten and 30 pages long with frame answers ranging from a word to several sentences. The problem with this type of text is that students do not feel very challenged and consequently may not learn as much as was hoped. Using texts where parts may be assigned as needed seems more successful.

Using exercises from the Harbrace Workbook along with the McGraw-Hill chapters theoretically should have caught areas where students weren't learning the material, but somehow the exercises just reinforced the feeling that everything was going all right when in actual fact the students were not getting any better. The real problem in using such exercises as a classroom activity is that the students are either bored or baffled and an instructor can not deal with both groups at once. The place for remedial activities is in an individualized setting where they can be assigned to correct specific student problems.

I also assigned an in-class paragraph to be written once a week. There was marked improvement during the quarter in this part of the program. Since some of the students started out being virtually nonverbal, any improvement was obvious, of course. I suggest that this noticeable

improvement of really low students (even though their best may not even make them average writers) is one reason teaching developmental students is so satisfying to an instructor. Imagine, though, what it would feel like to really help low students so progress can be concretely measured, as in the Florida State University writing laboratory.

The problems I experienced in Clayton Junior College's developmental writing program are due to a combination of poorly applied materials and instructor ignorance, but both these areas can be improved without completely overhauling the program.

There are some very good things about the English program at Clayton Junior College in addition to these problem areas. For example, at their initial faculty meeting every instructor in every department is furnished with a copy of the Harbrace Handbook and told to require correct writing in all work done in their courses. Unheard of in most places, this emphasis on writing is found in Georgia partly because of the Rising Junior test given to all sophomores in both two- and four-year colleges. Consisting of objective English and math sections and a writing sample, the test must be passed before a community college student can transfer to a four-year school or a four-year school student can become a junior level student. Failure of any one part means that the entire test must be

retaken, and as it is graded by three instructors from other schools, it seems to ensure at least some measure of equality among third year students, whether from a two- or four-year college.

There are some bright spots in the teaching of developmental English in the United States today. Even some programs that are less successful have sections that can be adapted to other student populations. The most important characteristics of a successful program seem to be planning, organization, and trained staff. Materials and expensive equipment are less important than having a program aimed at helping students on an individual basis. If a director needed to choose between materials and extra staff, I would suggest he choose the extra staff. A good grant writer could probably get both. In my conclusion I will evaluate the state of developmental English programs today and offer further suggestions.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Although not enough research has been done in the field of writing and how people learn to write, a consolidation of the research that exists suggests some ideas that would be helpful to a person designing a program in developmental writing. Many suggestions made some years ago are still valuable in evaluating what a writing program should do. For example, twelve years ago, Albert Kitzhaber made the following recommendations for composition programs which could easily be adapted for developmental programs:

1. Limit classes to twenty and allow no instructor to teach more than two sections per term,
2. Exempt only the very best and make the course worthwhile for the rest,
3. Plan assignments to teach something about writing,
4. Have definite department policies about texts, books, grading, theme marking, acceptable errors, and final grades,
5. Have students revise and return their papers,
6. Have the class taught by all ranks within the department,

7. Train graduate assistants to teach the composition course, and
8. Require that all¹ departments demand literacy in written work.

Because developmental writing needs can exist in students in any year of school, the little research that has been done on writing and how people learn to write better must be sifted to ascertain what parts can be applied to adult students needing help. Much research done on regular freshman classes, for example, can be applied to developmental students even though they were not the subject of the original research. In a similar way, if good programmed materials are purchased for use in a developmental composition workshop or laboratory intended primarily for freshmen, the materials would also be useful to upperclassmen who need help with the process of written composition.

It is nearly impossible to pigeonhole information about writing with admonitions that this is for freshmen, this for English majors only, this for developmental students. Some broad categories are possible, of course. Generally speaking, grammar and mechanics are areas of interest to a developmental teacher while literature for its own sake is not. This is not to say that methods of teaching grammar and mechanics to adults are useless to

¹Kitzhaber, p. 131-137.

teachers beyond the developmental level or that the study of literature is beyond the developmental student, but if a system of priorities were to be established, it seems to me that a teacher of developmental students ought to know how to teach the following things to adults:

1. grammar
2. mechanics
3. methods or organization of a theme
4. methods of development of a paragraph
5. reading
6. oral communication
7. practical writing
8. study skills

Most of these areas could be covered in an efficient training course. Exposure to current materials and methods through reading and preparing bibliographies would be invaluable to a future instructor, who should also receive practical training in actual classroom teaching and marking of papers. Other than this class, future instructors of developmental students in writing could benefit from courses in linguistics (especially problems encountered in teaching English as a second language and as a second dialect) and practical writing. It is probably more important for these teachers to be prepared to teach a student to write business letters or reports than to analyze a short story; I also emphasize exposure to practical writing because few English majors would think to take the courses otherwise. Given the usual English major background and curriculum, learning to teach how to write about literature will take care of itself.

It seems to me almost as important to develop-
mental instructors to be aware of materials that are
available to help students with grammar and mechanics
problems as it is for them to be able to recognize cor-
rect writing through personal facility with the details
of writing. Again, most English majors will have had
their last formal grammar course in junior high school
and probably need to be exposed to grammar and mechanics
again to brush up on their skills. Linguistics courses
will help here too, because the perspective made possible
by viewing language through its changes will soften some
of the handbook rigidity new instructors may possess. My
appendix of materials lists helpful texts and programs
according to areas such as grammar, mechanics, spelling,
vocabulary, study skills, and the composing process.

That there is a need for developmental writing
courses seems obvious to anyone teaching freshman English.
For example, three community colleges testing their entering
students in 1974 found that about 60% of them had writing
problems severe enough to warrant entering programs in
developmental writing. Cuyahoga Community College in
Cleveland tested 10,000 students and found 60% to have
writing problems; Kalamazoo Valley Community College tested
1,697 students and found 1,021 or 62% of them to have writing
problems; Central Piedmont Community College tested 60 stu-
dents and found 47 or 70% to have writing problems. Kalamazoo

Valley Community College continued the study of tested students to discover that the thirty-three students who did not get help after it was recommended to their group of 1021 students with writing problems "had a withdrawal rate twice as great, a G.P.A. one grade lower, and a failure rate twice as great as that of the students who followed the recommendation for special help."²

Further research needs to be done in the following areas:

1. Establishing if certain theme topics are more effective with developmental students than other topics. If so, what kind of topics seem to elicit the most effective writing?
2. Designing grammar and mechanics texts which can be used by parts as reference books rather than in sequence as they are written. These texts ought to emphasize the changing nature of the language system rather than contain rigid sets of rules to follow.
3. Evaluating the effect on students of not receiving college credit or grades for developmental classes. Sabina Johnson has stated that "the unjust, punitive aspects of the course (fee and no credit) create enormous hostility" in developmental students³ at the University of California at Berkeley. Does this resentment have a detrimental effect on their work in the class, or is it possible that development students can learn that they need to improve their writing skills before they can compete in a university environment?

²Mary Lou Conlin, Concepts of Communication: Writing, Instructor's Guide (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1975), p. 3-4.

³Sabina Johnson, p. 679.

4. Performing readability studies on texts, as it has been claimed⁴ that the commonly used Harbrace Handbook is too difficult for developmental students to read.
5. Evaluating subject matter effective with developmental students. Currently a number of instructors are finding that language itself is an effective subject for a developmental writing class. I have heard about consumer-oriented courses, but so far have been able to find nothing written on such courses. A similar subject would be practical communication; its use in a developmental course needs to be considered.

Until more consolidation of research is done, interested instructors can find helpful information on teaching developmental writing in College English, College Composition and Communication, Research in the Teaching of English, and English in the Two-Year College. The bibliographies in Research in the Teaching of English are so far the best current compilation of articles on teaching writing. The text reviews in College Composition and Communication would help an instructor decide which texts might be useful in working with developmental students.

Developmental students will probably increase in number in the future because of open admissions programs and special student programs to admit minority students. Courses must be designed for such students, and staff must be trained to teach them.

⁴Tigar, p. 20, quoting Harvey Weiner, director of freshman writing at LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York.

APPENDIX

TEXT SELECTION FOR A DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING PROGRAM

A developmental writing program should serve several purposes:

1. To help students of any level with writing assignments, such as term papers, book reports, research papers, etc., and personal writing forms such as résumés, letters of application, essays asking for financial aid, etc.
2. To help students overcome mechanical difficulties which keep them from writing standard English.
3. To help composition students outside of class to organize better and write more effectively.

To achieve these purposes would require little in the way of space or materials but could be expanded as money or area became available. It would be possible to set up a lab that used only the ubiquitous desk copies with which English teachers are inundated, a lab which was situated in the instructor's office. Unlike reading or study skills, the teaching of writing relies more on the one to one relationship of teacher and student and less

on expensive hardware and supplies. In the bibliography which follows I will classify books by their areas of teaching usefulness for developmental students and will also point out combinations that would work well in a developmental program.

Assuming that a developmental program would supplement rather than replace regular composition classes, the student population and the resulting text criteria can be narrowed down. Standard handbooks, rhetorics and readers may be largely eliminated—they can be used in regular classes as the department chooses. Few of them are applicable to lower students anyway—they seem either rule-oriented or jargonistic, espouse writing too difficult for those who may not yet have mastered sentences and paragraphs and usually are just plain too hard to read.

Only recently have texts for adults begun to be readability-rated. Since verbal difficulties of all four modalities often exist concurrently (especially in reading and writing, but also in listening and speaking), it makes sense to gear basic writing texts to students who also may very well have reading problems.

Another new development in available texts seems to be some reference, at least, to testing and research. While past "educational materials" (as opposed to "text-books") such as SRA kits and other lab-oriented teaching

helps always included such data to prove their efficacy, the assumption seemed to be if you wrote a textbook, anyone who chose to use it would have to trust you that the ideas in it might work for teaching. Perhaps the authors of the programmed materials and modules coming out now are more teachers than researchers (they tend to be from community colleges rather than four-year schools, so at least they would have more experience with developmental students) and are more apt to have tested their methods on real students rather than to have merely speculated on the results.

Tests now tend to list research and programming consultants, which is a beginning. I would like to know how many and what kind of students used the method and how it worked, also. Usually this data is referred to in an introduction—since writing is such a subjective area, it would be hard to refer to scores and percentages that would be meaningful anyway, even though behavioral objective oriented legislatures want such scores. Some new texts include such objectives, which at the least would save teachers from having to write them and at best give some idea of the specific scope of the material. Lower students definitely perform better given specific goals and this way the goals are built into the program.

Another external criterion for text selection for a developmental program is the availability of a

thorough teachers' guide. I had never really thought too much about this since so few texts go beyond the minimal booklet stage—a thin (in all senses) list of study questions or answers to exercises—until I used Menning and Wilkinson's Communicating Through Letters and Reports in a business communication course. The teachers' manual is unbelievably thorough, including course philosophy, sample syllabi for both quarter and semester systems, sample letters for a full range of grades for each type of letter, sample quizzes and hour exams and finals using different types of questions, and discussion of emphasis for different points.

If this sounds prescriptive, think how much help that would be to a beginning teacher, remembering that most instructors of composition, especially the lower students, are people in lower echelons of the teaching hierarchy.

Conlin's Contexts for Composition has this kind of manual. She describes programs for group and open instruction and offers alternative ways for putting the modules together, along with giving grading criteria and suggesting ways of assigning beginning places to students.

Another positive feature of the Conlin test is its modularity. Too many of the books now offered for developmental English are sequential programs which assume that students need to enter at the beginning and

go through all grammar for starters. Most diagnostic tests prove this false—students have individual weaknesses but do not lack all knowledge of language systems. While a viable text needs to include all areas for reference by those who need them, it should not be necessary for each student to use all parts. Separate units are thus a plus when choosing a text, whether they are actually published separately, like the New Century series and Ms. Collin's text or simply usable nonconsecutively, as in a number of other texts.

I think a minimum of paraphernalia is also a plus in choosing a text. Audio materials and transparencies may offer variety in teaching approaches but should not be vital to the program; specific answer sheets and cover sheets and record-keeping devices should not get in the way of the primary task—learning the details of writing. The age of accountability often requires that statistics be kept but this can be done unobtrusively.

The texts which are described next are divided into the following groups: writing mechanics, the composing process, study skills, vocabulary, and spelling. The mechanics texts are generally for reference and practice exercises; the composing texts are for the actual theme writing portion of the class. I have included the other three groups to give an idea of available material which could be used with developmental students in a writing program.

Writing Mechanics

- Blumenthal, Joseph C. English 2600 and English 3200. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1962. Programmed courses in grammar and usage, these books are designed for students who need a thorough review. They deal with (2600) real basics and (3200) grammar and sentence building, construction and subordination.
- Bossone, Richard M. and Reid, James M., Jr. The Handbook of Basic English Skills. Lexington, Mass.: Xerox College Publishing, 1971. Good basic programmed text. Final quizzes on each unit.
- Gilbert, Marilyn B. Clear Writing. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1972. A programmed text with pretests for each chapter, practice exercises and review tests to diagnose student needs and check progress. A "Concise Guide to Clear Writing" at the back of the book gives a handy summary of rules covered.
- Gorrell, Robert M. and Laird, Charlton. Modern English Workbook. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963. More than half of the book is on sentence style and organization of the theme, but 64 pages are devoted to mechanics. Lots of exercises.
- Graham, Sheila Y. (in consultation with Mrs. John C. Hodges) Harbrace College Workbook. Form 7A and B. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972. Thirty short units on elements of grammar, punctuation, spelling and diction and effective sentences, each followed by a number of good exercises. It might be a good choice for developmental use if the school used the Harbrace Handbook also, especially if the diagnostic test could be keyed to the Harbrace system and then parts assigned prescriptively.
- Hurtik, Emil and Lillard, Thomas. In Phase: Sentence, Structure, Style. Robert E. Yarber, Consulting Editor. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1973. Goes from grammar through sentence errors, verbs, spelling. Lots of exercises and practice tests. A good lab book for prescriptive helps.

Jacobson, David B. Program for Revision: A Practical Guide. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974. One of the best prescriptive helps books out today, it lists programming and testing consultants. Four prelessons evaluate problems with pronoun, subject-verb-complement, modifier, and coordinating conjunction identification, then 12 units deal with errors with words and within sentences (capitals, endings, apostrophes, pronoun agreement, pronoun forms, subject-verb agreement, adjectives and adverbs, punctuating and arranging modifiers, punctuating coordinating parts, working with coordinates, making comparisons). Three last units deal with the whole sentence and beyond; fragments, run-ons, and consistency. Each unit has a pre- and posttest and is programmed for individual work and correction.

Kerstiens, Gene, series editor. Educulture Tutorial Systems. Used in the FSU lab, this series of mini-courses uses booklets and cassettes in 15 areas: basic sentence patterns, sentences with modifiers, using independent phrases, major sentence errors, subject-verb agreement, problems with subjects and verbs, using adjectives and adverbs, pronoun case, pronoun reference, grammatical errors, problems with the comma, special punctuation use, and using standard punctuation. Parts can be used separately.

Loewe, Ralph E. The Writing Clinic. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973. Pre- and posttest writing assignments, with three units on sentences, mechanics, and organizing in between. Might be hard to use by parts only, but looks like a good approach for students who need help but are not at the bottom of the group.

McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System. 1970. Developed at the University of Minnesota Reading and Study Skills Center, this complete series of programmed texts includes five volumes on study skills, eight on reading, one on vocabulary, two on spelling, three on writing, and three on math. The writing volumes, Writing Skills 1 and 2 and Paragraph Patterns, are very basic and completely individualized. The parts could be assigned out of order.

New Century Basic College English. Educational Division, Meredith Corporation, New York, 1970. Another modular approach, with the awkward rub-out-the answer format mentioned under Spelling. Separate booklets on capitals, abbreviations, end marks, subject-verb agreement 1 and 2, punctuating quotations, using apostrophes, words frequently misused, commas, pronoun reference. Used in many community college labs.

Palmer, Raymond C. The English Sentence: A Programmed Course. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1966. (SRA) Pretests, 80 pages; The Learning Program, 340 pages; Review, 100 pages. Question after question. Covers the material but does so at the expense of the student's interest. Too rule oriented for the average student.

Slay, Alan L. Programmed Instruction in Basic English Grammar. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1968. Tries to avoid "rules" in his 12 lessons. Three appendices might be the most helpful part: basic sentence patterns, tips for better theme writing, and theme evaluation guide. Spiral bound (good) with the answers in the back. Each lesson has a pretest, so parts could be assigned as needed.

Willis, Hulon. Basic Usage, Vocabulary, and Composition. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969. Forty lessons in usage cover spelling, the apostrophe, capitalization, the hyphen, the verb, punctuation, and modifiers.

The Composing Process

Abbott, Janet S. The Whole Thing. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974. A very basic individualized programmed text. She taught five sections of 25 students each and used it, so it at least is more practical than some experimental programs. Works up to four papers in easy stages: place paper, taking stock, primary experience, and secondary experience. Emphasis is on ordering, revision, verbs. An excellent interview packet near the beginning gives the instructor ideas for later paper topics from the student's own experience.

- Adams, W. Royce. Think, Read, React, Plan, Write, Re-write. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1975. Designed as a composition text for developmental students, this book moves from planning through methods of development to transitions and then works through problem areas such as fragments and pronoun agreement. The six steps in the title are followed in each of ten units which each produce a finished theme. A structured but useful text.
- Conlin, Mary Lou. Concepts of Communication. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1975. Five self-contained modules: Writing Skills, Summary, Paragraph, Essay-test and Theme. Evaluated by community college staff nationwide. The basic first module on writing skills covers words, sentences, punctuation, conventions, spelling, and vocabulary in 40 units. The first writing assignment is a summary, which also checks reading skills. The readings in the modules are readability rated. One good feature: writing is evaluated by fixed and defined criteria, so classes could be taught by a number of people and grading consistency might be more possible than usual. Stresses specific assignments. Lots of behavioral objectives. Instructor's guide is looseleaf. Lots of good things about this series—seems very well thought out.
- Elgin, Suzette Haden. Pouring Down Words. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975. A really good text using language as the subject matter for a writing class. Could be used with developmental students as long as their reading skills are average; would be an excellent text for regular composition classes.
- Grasso, Mary Ellen and Maney, Margaret. You Can Write. Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1975. Written by two community college teachers, this composition text begins with an excellent section on diction and semantics, then moves into development, outlining, types of themes. A section on the research paper and a brief handbook are also included. A practical and interesting text.
- Kelly, Lou. From Dialogue to Discourse: An Open Approach to Competence and Creativity. Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1972. Emphasizes use of everyday language and communication as a response to new experiences. Warns

of student responsibility in open approach. Writing requires an audience, is "talking on paper." The open, talk/write method is used until writing becomes easier. At first, gets writing muscles moving by filling a page or two several times a week. Introduces "copyreading" to correct deviations from standard usage about midquarter. Requires a very committed teacher.

Kerrigan, William J. Writing to the Point: Six Basic Steps. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974. One of the best writing books I have ever used with low students. Teaches that theme must have a clear point and support it in a logical way. Written conversationally, almost like a tape-recording. Step one is the thesis sentence, two is three sentences about the thesis, three is four or five sentences about each of the three sentences, four adds detail, five makes references clear, six gives transitions.

Kytle, Ray. Clear Thinking for Composition. New York: Random House: N.Y., 1973. Role-playing discussions to emphasize logical thinking, objectivity, etc. Not much of a text for low students, but good for some ideas on approaches for logic discussions.

Kytle, Ray. Prewriting: Strategies for Exploration and Discovery. New York: Random House, 1970, 1972. Much discussion of organizing and exploring a subject before writing begins. Good for low students.

Maca, Suzanne and Patterson, Dorothy. Awareness: Exercises in Basic Composition Skills. Xerox College Publishing, Lexington, Mass., 1972. Must be done in order, which is too bad, because parts of it look good for prescriptive help. Emphasizes observation, point of view, logic, supportive evidence. Good theme topics. Lots of grammar.

Martin, Lee J. The Five-Hundred Word Theme. Revised by Harry P. Kroitor. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974. A traditional treatment of short theme writing which emphasizes clear structure and organization. Popular in community colleges, the text used models and analysis of example paragraphs to lead students into basic themes. A basic and practical book. Teachers' manual has answers to exercises only.

- Mills, Helen. Commanding Sentences. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1974. May have too much terminology for low students, but looks like a good program. Individualized instruction—she used it in a learning lab at American River College in Sacramento, California. Units on sentence patterns, modifiers, coordination, pronouns and subject-verb agreement, subordination, sentence inversion, passive verbs, verbals, punctuation and capitalization, point of view, parallelism and editing.
- Potter, Robert R. Making Sense: Exploring Semantics and Critical Thinking. New York: Globe Book Co., Inc., 1974. A good book for writing assignments, since the subject matter is extremely interesting and gives the students something to think about beyond the general topics they usually are encouraged to write on. Section on analogies would help them with standardized tests. Good teacher's manual.
- Roberts, Louise A. Write Coherent Paragraphs and Organize Your Ideas. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1975. These two monographs in the Harper Studies in Language and Literature series are concise, practical treatments of their topics. A modular approach could be used with self-contained texts like these.
- Stovall, Sidney T., et al. Composition: Skills and Models. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973. Readings are short and yet well chosen by content and author. They illustrate details of craft in each chapter. Interesting approach which would again give students something to write about. Section on essay examinations also.
- Strong, William. Sentence Combining: A Composing Book. New York: Random House, 1973. One hundred and fifty-seven pages of sentence groups—emphasis on choice—not one correct answer, etc. Phase two has more levels in sentences. A really good, straightforward and useful book. Used in the FSU lab. Teachers' manual had transparencies for overhead projection.
- Tibbetts, Arnold M. and Tibbetts, Charlene. Strategies of Rhetoric. Rev. ed. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1974. A good basic composition text, it also includes section on argument, the research paper, business and

technical writing, plagiarism, and a handbook. Tibbets does not use grammatical terminology, but teaches sentence development similarly to to the Christensen method of free modifiers.

Troyka, Lynn Quitman and Nudelman, Jerrol. Taking Action: Writing, Reading, Speaking, and Listening through Simulation-Games. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, N.J., 1975. An innovative composition text which uses simulation-games ("Uprising Behind Bars," "Conservation Crisis," "Population Control," and three others) to stimulate discussions and role-playing and get students to write. Tested at an urban community college, it seems like a good text for difficult developmental classes, as it would provide subject matter as well as stimulation to write to students who might not be responsive to traditional techniques of teaching composition. It would have to be used with supplemental material on basic writing skills.

Waddell, Marie L.; Esch, Robert M.; and Walker, Roberta R. The Art of Styling Sentences: Twenty Patterns for Success. Woodbury, N.Y.: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1972. uses a pattern approach to sentence development. Tested at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Whissen, Thomas, Components of Composition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1975. A basic composition text stressing theme modules which have a thesis statement, three subtopics, topic sentences, illustration and analysis, and conclusions. Straightforward and practical.

Wittig, Susan. Steps to Structure: An Introduction to Composition and Rhetoric. Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, 1975. A first year composition book which uses sentence combining and Christensen's free modifiers to improve student writing. It is modular and self-pacing so students can gradually move on their own from practice with improving sentences to a whole theme. This text would be a good one for teaching groups who require some guidance but can generally work on their own. Helpful teacher's manual includes some suggestions on how to use the book effectively as well as including unit mastery tests.

Study Skills

Baker, William D. Reading Skills. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974. A good basic reading text which covers vocabulary and study habits as well as reading skills.

Cohen, Ruth, et al. Quest: Academic Skills Program. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973. A programmed study skills text tested at the University of Michigan Reading Improvement Service, Quest covers reading efficiency, note-taking, essay exams, writing papers, and self-management.

Lipscomb, Delores H.; Martin, Judith I.; and Robinson, Alice J. The Mature Students' Guide to Reading and Composition. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1975. Volume I begins a very basic literacy text geared to adults who need to learn how to read. Has a thorough and helpful teacher's manual.

Vocabulary

Brown, James I. Programmed Vocabulary. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall, 1971. Using the prefix and root approach to vocabulary development, he has identified 20 prefixes and 14 roots to aid in analyzing words. Suffixes are treated briefly at the end. Diagnostic tests and review quizzes identify problem areas and reinforce learning.

Diederich, et al. Vocabulary for College, A,B,C,D. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967. Answer key follows each exercise. Used in the FSU lab.

EDL Work Clues Series For Vocabulary. Used by most labs—must be helpful.

Evans, Bergen. The Bergen Evans Vocabulary Program. Communicad: The Communications Academy, 2024 Locust St., Philadelphia, Pa., 19103. Found in most labs, this older series is both popular and useful.

- Evans, Bergen. Wordcraft. Chicago: Vocab, Inc., 1969. Good tape, filmstrip, three test program for foreign students, according to Pat Smittle at SFCC. She uses only the book and word lists with native speakers, thinking it too repetitious otherwise. The three types of tests—matching, choice and blanks—give some choice of format.
- Gale. Building and Effective Vocabulary. Woodbury, N.Y.: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1966 (113 Crossways Park Drive 11797) Separate answer key.
- Kottmeyer, William. Webster Word Wheels. St. Louis: McGraw-Hill, 1962. Teaching aid for word-analysis skills. There are 63 wheels which study two letter consonants, blends, prefixes, and suffixes.
- Skill Box. Areas covered include context clues, idioms, synonyms, homonyms, roots, prefixes, suffixes, contractions, possessives, plurals, origins of words. Clever format would make it a good alternative to the usual book approach. Hard to order, though, as absolutely no publishing information is given on the box.
- Willis, Hulon. Basic Usage, Vocabulary, and Composition. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969. Forty lessons in usage, 30 reading assignments, and ten writing assignments. Readings are followed by vocabulary exercises. Usage lessons are on spelling, the apostrophe, capitalization, the hyphen, the verb, punctuation, and modifiers.

Spelling

- Brown, James I. and Pearsall, Thomas A. Better Spelling: Fourteen Steps to Spelling Improvement. Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1971. A beginning diagnostic test groups errors, then chapters on most-missed groups can be prescribed.
- Hook, J. N. Spelling 1500: A Program. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967. Eighty units correspond to 80 word pretest and posttest, so problem areas may be identified and cleared up.

New Century Basic College English. Educational Division, Meredith Corporation, N.Y., 1970. Two of the booklets in the series deal with spelling. The big drawback of this series, one of the most used in community colleges and ESL programs, is the awkward rub-out-the-answer format which makes the booklets usable only once each. Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville has solved this problem somewhat by taping over the answer spaces and making a key for checking when sections are done. Tallahassee Community College, on the other hand, requires each student to buy each booklet assigned each time.

Trimble, Martha Scott. Programmed Review of English. New York: Harper and Row, 1969. One of the three books is on spelling. It covers 300 words in ten lessons. The other two volumes are called Diction and Writing.

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Gretchen Nadeen Vik was born December 8, 1944 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and attended public schools in Rapid City, South Dakota, until being graduated from high school in 1962.

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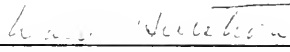
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.




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Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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